LIBRARY REDEEMER COLLEGE
777 GARNER RD E
ANCASTER ON L9K 1J4
Dec 2006

PM# 40008999 R9375

CHRISTIAN COURIER

November 20, 2006 A Reformed Biweekly No. 2803 $2.00

The simple truth about church growth . . . p. 12

No more sabbath? . . p.10

REDEEMER UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LIBRARY

CHRISTIAN COURIER
PER/BX/9401/.C36
NOV 15 2006

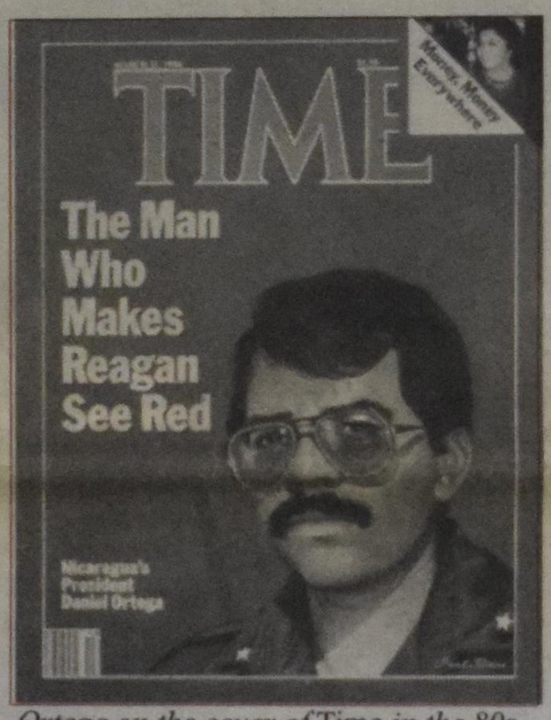
Nicaragua elects former revolutionary Daniel Ortega as president

Harry der Nederlanden

Evangelicals – most of them Pentecostals – have been playing a prominent role in Nicaragua's politics. During the recent elections they joined with Catholics to pressure the government to pass strict legislation banning abortion for any reason. But evangelical politics in Nicaragua is a far cry from right wing Republican politics in the U.S.

A significant segment of them probably helped elect to the presidency of their country that old nemesis of the American right, the former revolutionary and left-wing dictator Daniel Ortega. Ortega fared much better in the recent elections than most pundits expected. This was the fourth time he campaigned for the highest office in the land since he yielded power 16 years ago and instituted elections. Nicaraguans have very bad memories of the Ortega years and most have shunned his party, fearing a return of old conflicts.

Ortega receives congratulations from main rival Montealegre



Ortega on the cover of Time *in the 80s*

New election rules

This time around, however, Ortega was helped by a constitutional amendment that changed the rules. In the past, to win in the first round a candidate needed to get 45 percent of the vote. Although Ortega has been one of the main contenders, he has never managed to get anywhere near that number, so the elections have always gone to a second round. In the second round of voting, with the field cut down to the two main contenders, Ortega has always been rejected by a strong majority of the people. Through an agreement between the leading parties, the formula was changed so that a candidate can win on the first round with a mere 35 percent of the popular vote, as long as he carries 5 percent more of the votes cast than his nearest rival. With the ballots divided among five candidates, that was not difficult.

So to speak of a leftward movement in Nicaragua or of a great comeback for Ortega, as some journalists have, is not really accurate. Ortega carried a little over 38 percent of the popular vote according to the latest count. In the past that would have necessitated a second round of voting, and if past patterns are any indication, Ortega would have lost again. His nearest rival, Eduardo Montealegre, a Harvard-educated banker, carried 29 percent of the vote, and the other centrist candidate, Jose Rizo, took 26 percent of the vote. Not long ago both men belonged to the same party, led by former president Arnaldo Aleman; however, this party split after Aleman was indicted for stealing millions from the public purse. So between them, the two right wing candidates took 55 percent of the vote.

During the election campaign, the U.S. ambassador to Nicaragua, Paul Trivelli, urged the two parties to unite behind a single leader to defeat Ortega and the Sandinistas. But hardly anyone in Nicaragua appreciated the American attempt to interfere in their politics, and Trivelli may actually have helped Ortega garner more votes. The U.S. has raised objections not only because Ortega sought to establish a Marxist regime on this continent after ousting the right-wing dictator Somoza in 1979, but also because he has been playing footsie with Chavez of Venezuela. Chavez not only openly expressed his support for Ortega, he also sent fertilizer and fuel to Sandinista mayors to help the poor in an obvious attempt to influence the outcome of the elections. It looks munificent, but actually Nicaraguans receive far more in aid from the U.S.

Issues and fears

At present some 35 percent of the country's budget comes from foreign aid, and the economy is heavily dependent on trade with the U.S. But the economy has grown at an agonizingly slow rate, so although people are fearful of rocking the status quo, most have not benefited greatly from the years of free enterprise and free trade. In the Western hemisphere, only Haiti is poorer than Nicaragua. About 70 percent of the population lives in poverty, and unemployment stands at 17 percent. The two Liberal candidates could offer the electorate little more than the threat that if Ortega were elected things could get worse: the U.S. might cut off its aid program and foreign investments might drop.

Papers in Nicaragua also sent a shiver of fear through the country, publishing a threat by a U.S. senator that if Ortega won, the U.S. might prevent relatives living in America from sending money "home." Tens of thousands of Nicaraguans fled the country during the Ortega years, when per capita income dropped to 20 percent of what it had been and the country suffered triple-digit inflation. A huge segment of the population is dependent for their daily existence on those dollars arriving from abroad, as over half live on $2 per day. Although some remember that Ortega made education and healthcare readily available to the country's poor; others remember the bad times.

Ortega's make-over

However, this election presented them with a new Ortega. Although he still condemns capitalism, he does so by quoting Pope John Paul II.

"His holiness John Paul II called it 'savage capitalism,'" Ortega declared at one of his rallies. "His holiness said, 'The poor can't wait.' And the poor will not wait. On Nov. 5 [election day] the poor are going to bury 'savage capitalism' once and for all in Nicaragua."

However, during his campaign he carefully avoided attacks on the U.S., stressing the theme of reconciliation. In fact, he so stressed the themes of love and peace that his detractors began calling him Daniel Paz y Amor (Daniel Peace-and-Love). His wife, Rosario Murillo, a poet, chose for his theme song John Lennon's "Give Peace a Chance," and bright pink shirts to underline the theme. Recently Ortega and Rosario were married in the Catholic Church by a church leader, Cardinal Miguel Obando y Bravo, who staunchly opposed his revolutionary politics two decades ago. Ortega now regularly attends church and has supported the church's campaign to ban abortion. He even alludes to God in his speeches and asks his supporters to pray for him.

His running mate and several others in his retinue are former Contras who once fought the Sandinistas with the support of the Reagan administration (remember Oliver North and the Iran-Contra scandal?). In fact, after the revolution Ortega occupied the spacious home of his Contra running mate. It all was designed to underline that Ortega

See **Ortega** *on page 2 . . .*

News

Evangelicals played key role in Nicaragua's election

Sara Miller Llana

MANAGUA, NICARAGUA When Nicaragua passed one of the strictest abortion laws in the hemisphere last month, critics charged the Catholic Church with flexing political muscle ahead of the presidential election.

Yet, to lobby for the bill, Catholics invited evangelical Protestants to join a massive protest in October – a rare act of collaboration and a window into evangelicals' growing political sway in this predominantly Catholic country.

Evangelicals in Nicaragua were once overlooked as outcasts. Now no political contender can afford to alienate them. All but one of the leading presidential candidates, including Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega, supported their bid to ban all forms of abortion, even if a mother's life is in danger.

Their ascent has been among the most dramatic in Latin America. At the end of the 1970s, only five percent of Nicaraguans were evangelicals. Now they account for more than 20 percent – some say more than 30 percent – of the population. Their political clout is mounting as fast as the cavernous churches popping up along Managua's highways. They are running for office, partnering with Catholics, and forcing social change – which could augur a new exercise of power among evangelicals throughout the region.

"You can't talk about Nicaraguan society or politics now without talking about evangelicals," says Benjamin Cortes, rector of the Nicaraguan Evangelical University, a 12-year-old private university that sits in the shadow of Managua's Cathedral.

Evangelicals in Guatemala and Brazil also possess notable political influence. But Mr. Cortes says he believes that evangelicals in Nicaragua, one of the poorest nations in the Western hemisphere, have had success in politics because American missionaries overlooked this country throughout the 20th century.

That left Nicaraguans to hold leadership positions within churches big and small, he says, which naturally segued into politics.

Evangelicals' rise in Nicaragua

The first major sign of evangelicals' ascent here came in 1996, when Guillermo Osorno, a Pentecostal pastor, formed the Christian Path Party and ran for president, finishing in a remarkable third place. His party also earned four seats in the legislature.

In the Nov. 5 elections 21 members were running for the legislature and Mr. Osorno says his presidential hopes still flicker.

They are just a few of the nation's evangelicals seeking political office. "We've always had power in numbers, but we've not always used it," says Roberto Rojas, the vice president for the National Council of Evangelical Pastors of Nicaragua. Two years ago his wife, Elizabeth de Rojas, made a bid to become mayor of Managua. She dropped out before the race was over, but seeking office "gave us all hope" for the possibilities, Rev. Rojas says.

In the past year, Osorno has traveled to Peru and Ecuador to help evangelicals create political parties modeled after his own. He says he is planning a trip to Bolivia and hopes that evangelicals will increase their political clout across the region. "It's the only way Latin America is going to really change," he says.

That could mean a more conservative tide on social issues. Evangelicals across the region do not vote as a block, and many, such as Cortes, were against the ban on abortion under any circumstances. Some say their divisions have limited their political influence.

But Doug Petersen, who was area director for the Pentecostal Assemblies of God of Central America based in Costa Rica for 15 years starting in the mid-80s, says that on moral issues, such as abortion, they could come together. "I think the one area evangelicals do have huge impact [in Latin America] is where they feel threatened," he says.

No presidential candidate could afford to lose that vote, including Mr. Ortega, the revolutionary leader and archrival of the US during the Reagan administration. "For a lot of people in the West, it is surprising to learn that [the Sandinistas] would have such a conservative position on abortion," says Timothy Shah, a senior fellow in religion and world affairs at the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life. "They are partly trying to attract conservative Catholics, but there is no doubt they are trying to attract the growing number of evangelicals, too."

Key constituency now

Cortes estimates that about a third of the nation's evangelicals sympathized with Ortega, whose power coincided with expansive growth of evangelicals in Nicaragua. Mr. Petersen says he witnessed an attitude change toward minority religions throughout the 1980s.

"[Ortega] had an absolute major shift in the way he treated evangelicals," says Petersen, who says he was generously given permits to hold mega-ceremonies in Revolution Plaza. "To listen to Ortega, he says he got to know [evangelicals], that they were among the poor.... And then there are others who say he found this to be a fertile political field," he says.

If anything, the ground is even more fertile today.

At a recent service at Comunidad Hosanna, a Pentecostal church in Managua, congregants lifted Bibles into the air as rain thundered against the metal roof and 34 fans whirled. The vast space, which could easily accommodate two soccer fields, filled up as a 12-piece band livened up the crowd.

Many, such as Guillermo Lopez, say they feel more a part of the mainstream every day. "We are growing and that impacts behavior and society," says Mr. Lopez, a car salesman from Managua, who converted from Catholicism over six years ago.

For the presidential election, a group of evangelical leaders acted as electoral observers across the country. "I think it's a historical moment in Nicaragua," said Sixto Ulloa, a Baptist pastor and an ombudsman for the government's human rights department. "It's the first time evangelical leaders have been trained to participate in the electoral process."

Challenging Catholic dominance

It is a tectonic shift in a country long ruled by Catholicism. Protestants and Catholics have suffered a tense relationship, perhaps best illustrated by the late Pope John Paul II in 1992 comparing Protestant "sects" to "ravenous wolves."

So when the Catholic Church reached out to evangelical leaders in Nicaragua for the abortion bill, Rojas was not without doubts. He says he didn't believe Nicaragua's evangelical community was ready to join forces with the Catholic Church.

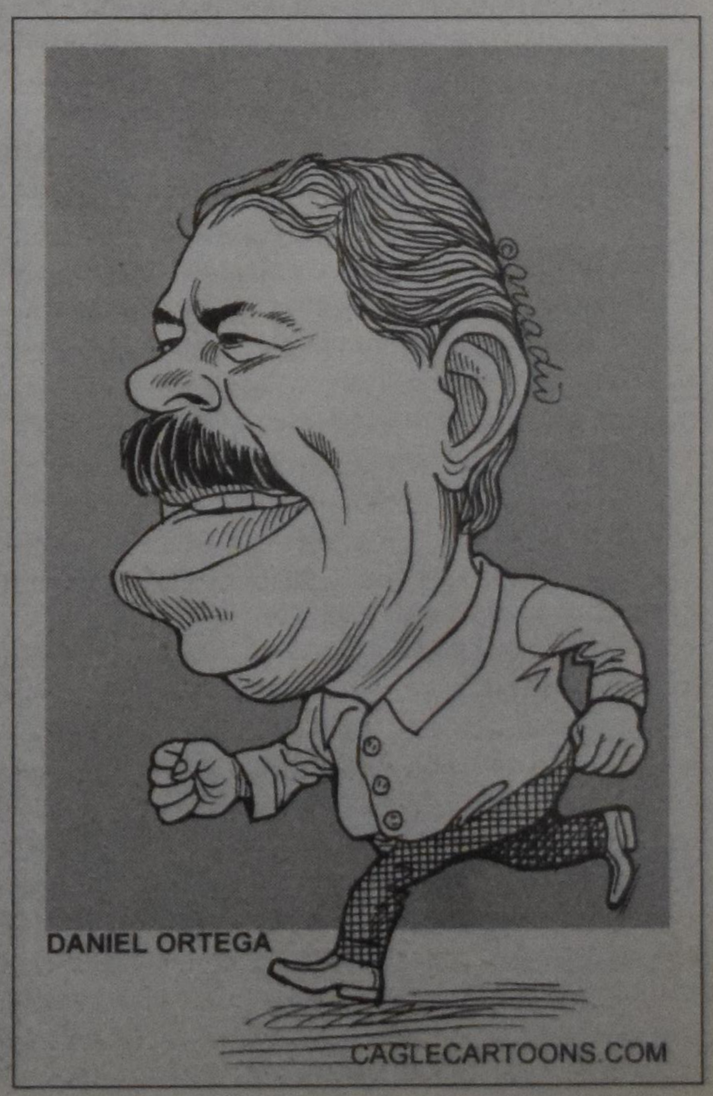
So for their public protest, Rojas, who helped mobilize congregants, suggested that the two groups march from separate locations, converging only before reaching the National Assembly.

In the end, the march drew 20,000 evangelicals and 50,000 Catholics, he says. "It was extraordinary, to be standing there with us and all the bishops," says Rojas. "It made us realize how much power we have together."

The endeavor could inspire future movements, both in Nicaragua and across Latin America.

"If you look at the social values of evangelicals and devout Catholics, there's all kinds of overlap. Working together on them is what's new," says Petersen. "But throughout Latin America there is some real common ground, which will make it easier to cooperate in the future."

Ms. Llana is Latin America correspondent for the Monitor and USA Today.



Ortega . . . *continued from page 1*

and the Sandinistas are looking to a future in which all parties will go forward reconciled and united.

Critics, of course, insist that it has all been a matter of image-politics. Ambassador Trivelli called Ortega "a tiger who hasn't changed his stripes." But the people of Nicaragua are hoping differently. They are hoping for the end of strong-man (caudillo) politics so that their fledgling democracy gets a chance to develop strong institutions.

He will be walking a tightrope. Many of his long-time supporters would like to see him join with Castro and Chavez to build an anti-U.S. alliance, but Ortega has been careful not to promise revolutionary changes, pledging to continue present free trade arrangements with the U.S. and to create a climate that will encourage foreign investments.

Which type of leftist leader will Ortega be, asks an editorial in the Christian Science Monitor: "Will he remain true to his Marxist past and follow the strongman model of Venezuela's Hugo Chavez or even Cuba's Fidel Castro, eroding his nation's democracy to stay in power, nationalizing key parts of the economy, and baiting the US in a regional contest for influence?

"Or will Mr. Ortega follow the strategy of leftist leaders like those in Brazil and chile who try to carefully adjust their market economies to uplift the poor and avoid confronting the US?"

The editorial reminds us that with less than 40 percent of the popular vote Ortega has hardly received a mandate for a wholesale change of direction, and his party still needs the support of other parties to govern. The Monitor concludes that in all likelihood Ortega has chosen the path of pragmatism after the pattern of leftist leaders in Brazil and Chile rather than the radicalism of Chavez.

News

Afghan mission: as vets are honored, concerns grow

Canada's per capita casualties are NATO's highest.

Mark Rice-Oxley and **Rebecca Cook Dube**
Correspondents of The Christian Science Monitor

LONDON AND TORONTO – When 3,000 British troops headed to Afghanistan in May to lead efforts to secure an unruly southern province, the government said the aim was to accomplish the three-year mission "without a shot being fired."

Since then, more British soldiers have died in Afghanistan than in Iraq, in what commanders say is the fiercest fighting Britain has faced in more than 50 years. Canada, meanwhile, has sustained more casualties per capita than the US, Britain, or any of the other NATO partners, making its combat toll the highest since the Korean War.

Afghan town at the foot of the mountains

As both countries prepared to remember their fallen on Armistice Day – known as Remembrance Day in Canada – there is a growing realization that the task they face in the southern provinces of Helmand and Kandahar will prove far tougher, deadlier, and longer than originally projected.

"If we are going to achieve what we set out to achieve – a stable society with a democratic government – we will be there for 15 to 20 years," warns Mark Lancaster, a British Member of Parliament and reservist who completed an eight-week tour with the Army in Helmand Province this summer.

The dramatic escalation of conflict in the area is straining NATO, which has overall command of security in Afghanistan. And in both countries, it is sharply changing public commitment to the mission. Now, less than half of Canadians and Britons are in favor of their troops' involvement in Afghanistan.

Originally, the mission in southern Afghanistan launched in May was billed as an exercise in "reconstruction and stabilization," an effort to help the Kabul government extend its writ into the lawless south and deal with the poppy cultivation that fuels the heroin trade at the same time. NATO troops would stay until Afghan forces were capable of assuring security themselves.

But between the resistance that military commanders say was far greater than anything they anticipated, a now-regrouping Taliban, and the vast, hostile terrain, both countries are having to adjust to a mission significantly different in both nature and scope.

"For 40 years, we've been thinking of the Canadian forces as peacekeepers," says Tim Woolstencroft, managing partner of Toronto-based polling firm The Strategic Counsel. "This is clearly peacemaking, with an emphasis on war."

With that shift in emphasis has come a noticeable uptick in casualties: Forty-two Canadian soldiers have died in Afghanistan, all but 10 of whom were killed this year; 32 British soldiers have been killed since May. Such tolls have stirred considerable debate in recent months on both sides of the Atlantic, though the Afghan mission is still largely perceived as more justifiable and worthwhile than the Iraq war.

In Canada, public support reached a mid-summer low of 37 percent but has since climbed to 44 percent as the conservative government has focused on reconstruction efforts benefiting women and children and emphasized Canada's role as part of a larger NATO effort.

"Canadians are a lot more comfortable if it's characterized as a part of a multilateral mission,' Mr. Woolstencroft says. "Unlike the US, we don't like to go on our own."

Both Britain – whose presence has nearly doubled from 3,000 troops to almost 6,000 – and Canada, which has more than 2,200 soldiers on the ground, have been insisting on troop reinforcements from other NATO countries. But although other countries do have contingents in southern Afghanistan – notably Denmark, Estonia, and the Netherlands – there is frustration that bigger allies like France, Germany, and Spain have been reticent about supplying frontline troops. The issue is set to dominate a NATO summit in Riga, Latvia, at the end of November.

"If you look at the number of troop-contributing nations, the number of nations fighting are relatively few," notes Mr. Lancaster. "It's one thing contributing troops to send a message of unity, but there is frustration that others aren't doing more."

Britain can hardly supply any more boots on the ground. With more than 7,000 troops in Iraq and contingents in the Balkans and Northern Ireland, army commanders have warned of overstretch.

While Canadian troops aren't spread as thin, there is nervousness at a perceived quagmire. Just this week, the deputy commander of the international assistance wing of the Kabul Military Training Centre said it would take at least 10 years before Afghan troops are ready to handle national security unaided by foreign soldiers.

"Canadians are wondering, 'When is this going to end?' And they're seeing no outcome for it," says Desmond Morton, a military history professor at Montreal's McGill University "There's a massive disillusionment."

But Professor Morton also criticizes Canadian naivete about the rigors of peacekeeping.

"One of the great myths in Canada is that peacekeeping is lovely and sweet and nonviolent," he says. "That's a civilian illusion. The illusion of our exceptional wonderfulness is, like most nationalist illusions, deeply held and stupid and immune to reason."

For now, the combat in southern Afghanistan has eased, though some argue that it's just a lull.

"It's too early to say," says one British officer, speaking by phone from southern Afghanistan. "It could be the onset of winter. Or it could be that the Taliban suffered a lot of attrition in the last four or five months, and have realized their tactics of trying to take district centers is not going to work. Maybe they are just changing tactics."

Lancaster adds: "The true test will come in March or April, when next year's fighting season starts again. Most are hoping the worst is over, but we will have to wait and see."

As one door closes, another always opens.

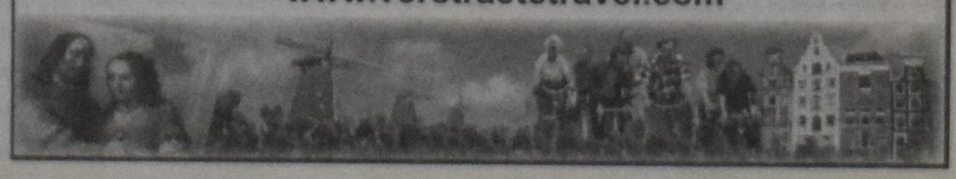
When employment ends, there are important decisions to be made. I can help you evaluate your alternatives.

Call us for our free Life Event Report, *Job Loss: Where to begin when your employment ends* and get tips on how to manage your finances and help you decide what doors are open to you.

CLARENCE WEIMA, CFP
Executive Financial Consultant
clarence.weima@investorsgroup.com
Phone: 1-800-488-9817
The Plan
by Investors Group
Investors Group Financial Services Inc.

™ Trademarks owned by IGM Financial Inc. and licensed to its subsidiary corporations.

'Your Invitation To Travel'
*** Bus Tours * Groups * Specials**
*** Sell offs * Vacation Packages**
VERSTRAETE TRAVEL & CRUISES
"Baldwin Verstraete serving you over 30 years"
Ria Brouwer Lishman, Manager
Henny Vuyk, Dorene Eggink, Marlene Brouwer, Earl Clint
St. Catharines office: 905-934-4414
Toll free: 1-800-405-6088
36 Secord Drive
(off Lake St., just north of QEW)
www.verstraetetravel.com



Editorial

The American elections: a sea-change in evangelical politics?

Harry der Nederlanden

The decisive loss of the House by Republicans in the midterm elections came as no surprise to anyone. It has been some time in the making. *The Los Angeles Times* called it "the most decisive political shift in Washington since 1994, when the Republicans won control of Congress for the first time in 40 years." It has become apparent to almost everyone that the US is floundering in Iraq, and many Americans are becoming convinced that it has all been for naught. Even the architects of the policy are expressing regret, although some are blaming the way the plan was executed rather than the plan itself. In hindsight, hundreds of American lives, thousands of Iraqi lives and billions of American dollars have been invested in a cause and a vision that now seems illusory. The world, least of all the Middle East, has not become a better place. Freedom and democracy have not taken root in the Middle East, and the people in the region are not saying, "God bless America."

In the past the Bush team has benefited from beating the terrorism and security drum. This time that went against them. Although employment in the US is high and the Republicans tried to push local issues to the fore, the midterm elections became a referendum on the Iraq war. Even Bush's so-called core, supposedly made up of the evangelical right, have lost confidence in his handling of that part of his job. And it was not, in fact, their number one priority in the first place. No doubt they have also been badly embarrassed by all the scandals associated with the representatives that they've sent to Washington. One of their main reasons for becoming involved in politics decades ago was to do away with the sleaze and corruption in Washington, and now they find themselves embroiled in it.

No wonder, then, that some of them are turning their backs on the Republican Party; in fact, some of them are turning their back on politics altogether. They see it as a diversion from their primary Christian calling.

But voting against Bush for what has transpired in Iraq won't necessarily bring major changes. The options are limited. It is doubtful that Robert Gates, the man who is replacing Rumsfeld, is going to be any more successful in bringing order to that fractured country, and the Democrats have not indicated that they actually have a better plan. They harbor an intense desire to bring the troops home, but so did the Republicans. Desire is not enough, and plans are a dime a dozen: every pundit has had two or three that he has trotted out at various stages.

The chairman of the Republican National Committee, Ken Mehlman, was probably right when he said that what happens in Iraq is not going to be dictated by American elections "but by what happens on the ground there and what's necessary." The US is riding a tiger they liberated and hoping hard that simply by hanging on they will tire the beast.

Both the White House and the new Democratically controlled House have made conciliatory gestures and have spoken of a new era of bi-partisan cooperation. That's decidedly not the way Bush and his evangelical base have played politics over the past six years. If the Democrats have caricatured Bush and the evangelicals over the past few years, the reverse is no less true. Some of the most well-known leaders among the evangelicals have been fiercely partisan, shrill and militant, often demonizing the Democrats as the party of apostasy. Perhaps now a new wind is beginning to blow.

Several articles published over the last few days suggest that evangelical politics in the US is undergoing a sea-change. It is admittedly hard to tell. Past descriptions of evangelicals in the mainstream media have often been hugely simplistic caricatures. Often ill-informed and usually contemptuous, most journalists could hardly be bothered to get things right. In speaking of the "theocons" or the "theocrats" they often confused the Left Behind folks, who are obsessed with Israel, with the so-called theonomists or reconstructionists, who are seeking to bring the whole Bible, especially the Old Testament, to bear on politics. The two groups have conflicting views of the end times (premil vs amil) and of the place of the Old Testament. Moreover, the majority of evangelicals in the US are not enthusiasts of either camp and probably couldn't spell out the difference.

The group of thinkers who influenced Bush policy in the Middle East, usually referred to as the neocons, operated from a quite different worldview. They have often been described as followers of the Jewish philosopher Leo Strauss, but that too is inaccurate. There is far less cohesion among these men and these groups than journalists have imposed on them. Yet, they formed a loose political alliance. All that seems very much in flux now. Not only has there been a shift in power, there has also been a shift in thinking on the right.

In *Sojourners* magazine, Jim Wallis declared the coming of a grand new alliance: "In this election, both the Religious Right and the secular Left were defeated, and the voice of the moral center was heard. A significant number of candidates elected are social conservatives on issues of life and family, economic populists, and committed to a new direction in Iraq. This is the way forward: a grand new alliance between liberals and conservatives, Democrats and Republicans, one that can end partisan gridlock and involves working together for real solutions to pressing problems."

Wallis's vision may be colored by his own desires, of course. This is what he has been working for – to broaden the range of "moral" issues important to Bible-believing Christians beyond the narrow concerns of abortion, sexuality and gay marriage to include social justice issues. But many evangelical leaders have already been echoing his concerns. Witness, for example, the large group of evangelical leaders who recently expressed their conviction that their faith has implications for environmental stewardship and for the campaign to combat global warming.

Amy Sullivan, writing in *The New Republic* the day after the election, said, "Yesterday, the God Gap all but disappeared. Americans who attend religious services on a weekly basis voted 51 percent for Republican candidates and 48 percent for Democrats, a statistically meaningless difference." The phrase "the God Gap" refers to the widespread conception that the Democratic Party has gradually been commandeered by the secularists and that it no longer speaks to people of faith, to Christians in particular. Over the last several months, spurred by leaders like Barack Obama and Hilary Clinton, the Democrats have been looking for ways to "sell" their platform to that large segment of the American public that still resonates to faith language. Sullivan explains that Democratic candidates had hired consultants to show them how to tailor their rhetoric and ads to religious groups. It worked, she reports: at last they are beginning to feel that Democrats are taking the trouble to listen and to talk to them. However, if this amounts to little more than a marketing strategy, a matter of cosmetics, that will soon become obvious to the community they are targeting.

On the other hand, according to a book published just prior to the elections by a former Republican staffer, David Kuo, who worked for the Office of Faith-Based Initiatives, many in the White House similarly use religion to manipulate their evangelical base.

In a long article in *Newsweek*, Lisa Miller cites Kuo to show that allegiances are shifting. She speaks of an evangelical identity crisis. She too says evangelicals are moving beyond a few narrow issues "to include issues of social and economic justice." She goes on, somewhat condescendingly: "For the first time in a long while, then, there is a serious rethinking of the politics of Jesus in America...," as if evangelical Christians haven't been debating such issues for years.

She points to Rick Warren as one of the pioneers of the changing identity: "Some Christians, exhausted by divisive wedge politics, are going back to the Bible and embracing a wider-ranging agenda, one that emphasizes reaching out to the poor and disenfranchised. Almost unanimously, these evangelicals cite as a model Rick Warren, pastor of Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, Calif. Members of his church sign up for missionary stints in Africa, resolve to feed the homeless and see themselves as part of a global Christian community."

As Joseph Loconte and Michael Cromartie point out in "Let's Stop Stereotyping Evangelicals" in *The Washington Post*, evangelicals have always been engaged in such ministries and still are – from the prison ministry of Charles Colson to drug rehabilitation programs run by inner city churches and to the campaign against AIDS coordinated by Warren. What brought many evangelicals into the public square, however, was the conviction that the "socialist" way of addressing many of these fundamental issues relating to both body and soul was actually subverting the values, the character and the way of life of Americans. That basic suspicion over toward the corrosive effects of the welfare or "nanny"state will be hard to change.

I don't know whether American evangelicals are having an identity crisis or whether they are merely reassessing their political strategies. The sea change described by many commentators actually amounts to a prediction or perhaps a not-so-secret hope that evangelicals are losing their identity or cohesion as a group – or rather as a political bloc – and that they are becoming more like everyone else.

Perhaps, however, the evangelical "identity crisis" means a return to an old tradition – revival. Revival is nothing more or less than an identity crisis precipitated by God's Word, which never stops calling us to conversion – also in terms of the way we live with one another and shape our social, political and economic institutions to mirror God's love and justice.

That's even more demanding than the call to become more like all other Americans.

Christian Courier

Founded in 1945

An independent biweekly that seeks to:
report on significant events in the Christian community and the world; express opinions infused by Scripture and rooted in a Reformed perspective;
provide contact for the Christian community.

EDITORIAL TEAM & PRODUCTION STAFF
Editor: Harry der Nederlanden editor@christiancourier.ca
Circulation: Rose der Nederlanden rose@christiancourier.ca
Accounts/Advertising Manager: Ineke Medcalf-Strayer ads@christiancourier.ca

The publication of comments, opinions or advertising does not imply agreement or endorsement by *Christian Courier* or the publisher. Please contact circulation if you cannot afford the subscription price but want to receive *Christian Courier*.

Christian Courier
1 Hiscott St, St. Catharines ON L2R 1C7
Tel: (905) 682-8311; 1-800-969-4838
Fax: (905) 682-8313; Web site: www.christiancourier.ca
Publications Mail Registration No. 09375
We acknowledge the assistance of the Government of Canada, through the Publications Assistance Program (PAP), toward our mailing costs. Canada

Images

DISCERNING MASKS 101

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

The first time I saw my mother's mask slip off of her face, I was shocked. I'm not sure what my siblings and I had done that day. Perhaps we were rowdy, or rude, or disobedient. Whatever the case, my mother's composed features dissolved into a torrent of tears. I had assumed she felt calm and happy, but my assumption was wrong. I became confused. I knew my mother to be steady as a rock, so who was this person shedding tears? At the time – I was 8-years-old – I didn't realize that I had begun my lifelong lessons in Discerning Masks 101.

Here's what I've learned and how I've tried to apply it to my parenting role.

I wear masks. My children wear masks. And we are not alone. Most people – to a greater or lesser degree, at one time or another – project an exterior image that hides their interior reality. Within each of us, complex worlds of personal history, feelings, hopes, dreams, and thoughts exist that others can't perceive from our facial expressions. How often when asked, "How are you?' have you replied "I'm fine!" Even when you were not doing well? How often have you smiled when tears burned your eyes? How often have you hidden behind boisterous bravado even as your palms sweated and your knees trembled?

Why do we hide behind masks?

Hiding and mask-wearing are two sides of the same coin – a coin that was fashioned in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve rejected God's way. Ashamed, they hid from him. Ashamed, we and our children hide our true selves from others, for if they knew us as we truly are, would they still accept and love us? Fear of exposure and rejection holds many masks firmly in place.

But no masks can bar God's penetrating gaze. As Hagar, Abraham's concubine, said, "You are the God who sees me . . . I have now seen the One who sees me" (Genesis 16:13). God unmasks us, and yet he loves us.

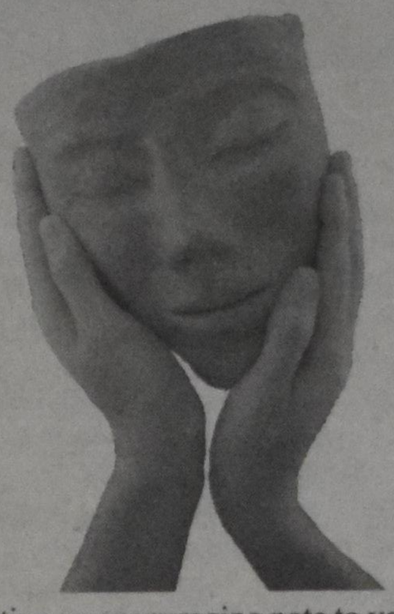
When we understand what lies behind our kids' masks, we still love them. In his book, *Testimony: Talking Ourselves Into Being Christians*, Thomas G. Long writes, "It has been said that if we really knew how to see with the eyes of our souls, we would see angels going before every person we meet, saying, 'Make way for the image of God! Make way for the image of God!' Once we have been trained . . . to see people as the treasures of God, we can't look at the kid in Blockbuster Video or the cashier at Wal-Mart the same way anymore" (Jossey-Bass, 2004, pp. 46). With this view of reality, we won't be able to look at our kids in the same way anymore either, no matter how distorted the masks they are wearing, no matter how firmly in place they are.

The complexity of our children's inner lives is often hidden from us because they wear masks. In *My Utmost For His Highest* Oswald Chambers writes, "There is always one fact more in every man's case about which we know nothing" (Barbour Publishing, Inc. 1963). That is also true of our children. I think I know my kids, but do I? In many ways, I do, but at times I do not. So, I need to constantly assess situations by asking questions.

For example, when my kids appear indifferent, does that mean they are aloof?

Or does it mean that they are hiding worry about a test, or a challenging basketball game? When they act arrogant, does that mean they are confident? Or does it mean they are hiding sadness because a friend betrayed them, or they didn't get the job they wanted? When they act cocky, does that mean they feel courageous? Or does it mean that they are hiding their fear about getting their driver's licence, or being confronted for a wrong they committed?

Answering these questions involves discernment and wisdom, as well as another quality that Desmond Tutu points out in his book, *No Future Without Forgiveness*: "Even more importantly, we should be generous in our judgments of others, for we can never really know all there is to know about another" (Doubleday, 1999, pp.169). If we allow generosity to shape our judgments, we will offer compassion to our mask-wearing children who struggle to navigate life in a complex, difficult world.



Compassion wells up in us because we know how painful it can be and how much energy it can take to stay hidden behind masks. Even though we can't forcibly remove our children's masks, we can seek creative, unobtrusive ways to show them compassion even while being shut out of their inner worlds. For example, your son wears a mask of indifference while trying to hide his fears about leaving home for the first time to attend college hundreds of miles away. You sense that he is anxious, but he refuses to talk about it or to reveal his true emotions. Remembering the times you've hidden your fears behind masks of bravado, laughter, or confidence, you are able to extend compassion to your son by, for example, casually mentioning in his hearing a few details of your first major leave-taking from home and how God provided for you, by writing an encouraging note to your son and leaving it on his pillow, or by putting a comforting hand on his shoulder when he walks past you. Though he might not be able or willing to articulate a response, you can be certain that on some level he will be reassured by your loving gesture.

Finally, aware of the complexity of our mask-wearing children's lives, we reach out to them in compassion in order to teach them to become authentic people – people who will name their emotions and take responsibility for them, who will honestly admit their failures and strengths, and who will acknowledge the comforting presence of an all-seeing God. The only way that we can accomplish this is by modeling authenticity. We can name our emotions and take responsibility for them. We can honestly admit our failures and strengths. And we can celebrate the fact that the Lord has searched us and knows us (Psalm 139: 1) and that "nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight" (Hebrews 4:13a).

Will we be able to do this perfectly? Of course not. As long as we live in this fallen world, that's impossible. Yet, through the power of the Holy Spirit, we and our children will increasingly live lives characterized not by hiding, but by being "hidden with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3).

United Church targets 30-45 year olds with ad campaign

The United Church of Canada, the country's largest Protestant denomination, has announced the launch of what *The Star* called "an ambitious and provocative" campaign to appeal to the 30-45 year old age group. Over the next three years the church will spend a whopping $10.5 million on ads and a special website.

United church moderator David Guiliano pointed out that this is the age group missing in most United Church congregations, but that "It is also an age group that is beginning to ask some spiritual questions."

When they begin establishing their families and raising children, or when their parents die, they are faced with fundamental questions about life and death and the kind of community in which they want to raise the children.

"We would like our churches to be the places where they explore these questions," Guiliano says.

So the ad campaign targets these sorts of questions. In one ad, a newborn baby is shown with a hospital bracelet that reads: "Warning: Some reassessment of priorities and beliefs may be required."

It's the perfect message to aim at people who may, in fact, be reassessing all their assumptions about life because of the arrival of a baby, says Guiliano.

"When my kids were born, we were so desperate for community," he told the *Star*.

But where once young people could turn to extended families in such times of need, that is less of an option today as people are forced to move to find work, he says.

And that can leave them feeling very alone during one of the most challenging stages of their lives.

People in that age group often do not think of turning to the church for answers, because many of them have had little or no exposure to church. "All they know are the stereotypes," says Rev. Keith Howard, who spearheaded the new campaign.

The first ad in the series will come out in time for Christmas, and will feature Jesus sitting in a shopping mall Santa Claus display, with a child on his knee. It's meant to provoke questions about the true meaning of Christmas, says Howard.

[See The Star, *Nov. 8, 2006: "United Church launches $10M ad blitz."]*

Christian Courier

Member of Canadian Church Press and Evangelical Press Association

Canada Mail:
PUBLICATIONS MAIL AGREEMENT NO. 40009999
REGISTRATION NO. 9375
RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO
CHRISTIAN COURIER
1 HISCOTT ST
ST. CATHARINES ON L2R 1C7
email: **subscriptions@christiancourier.ca**

U.S. Mail:
Christian Courier
(USPS 518-090)
Second-class postage paid at
Lewiston NY
Postmaster: send address changes
to: Christian Courier, Box 110
Lewiston NY 14092

Subscriptions:	**Canada (G.S.T. incl.)**	**USA**	**Overseas**
one yr. (25 issues)	$44.00	$40.00 US	$85.00
two yrs. (50 issues)	$80.00	$75.00 US	

Advertising deadlines: display and classified advertising: Tuesday, 9 a.m. (13 days before publication date) See classified pages or web site **www.christiancourier** for more details.
(ISSN 1192-3415) Published biweekly on Mondays.

Address all correspondence to: 1 Hiscott St, St. Catharines ON L2R 1C7
Tel: 905-682-8311 or 1-800-969-4838, or fax: 905-682-8313
e-mail: Advertising: ads@christiancourier.ca
Subscriptions: subscriptions@christiancourier.ca **PRINTED IN CANADA**

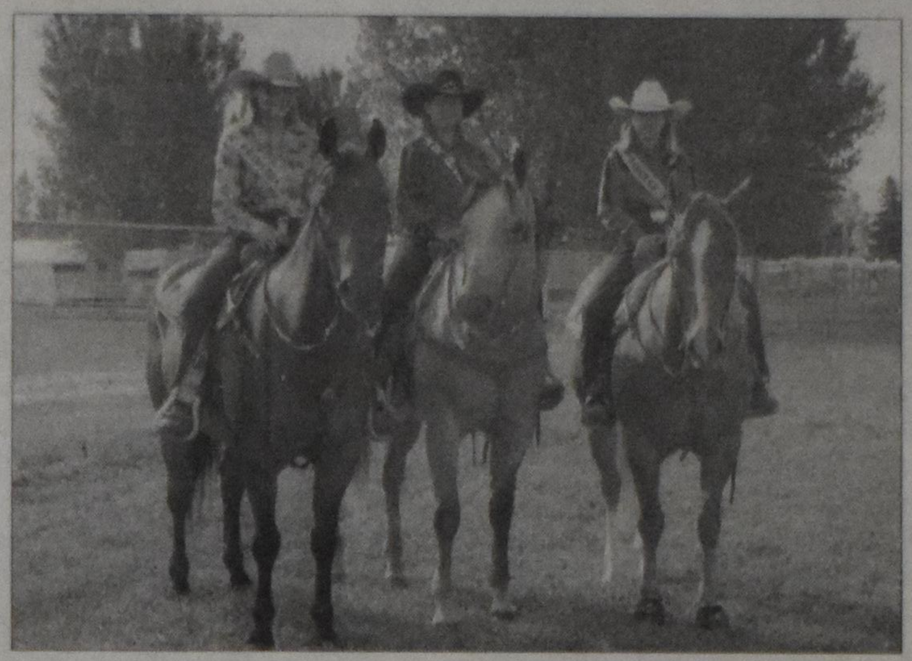
Wonders

The classroom: a wonder of creation

Curt Gesch

I went to school to teach science. I was prepared to "open the students' eyes to the wonders of God's world." I was prepared to teach about individual organisms, populations, communities, ecosystems, biomes, and the biosphere.

I went to school and found . . .
Allison arriving early at 7:30 to practice a song on her violin for the morning assembly.
Dustin and Jesse lying on their backs in the student lounge plucking guitar chords during recess.
Tyler, Darren, and James moulding mud into a relief map of Palestine.
A. J. juggling hacky-sacks in my face all lunch hour, accompanied by his magisterial commentary on the day's activities.
Krystal and April thinking about horses, horses, and horses.
Ruth and Merissa reading about horses, horses, and horses.
Eleven grade 7 students struggling with math assignments with a Haydn string quartet on the sound system.
Derek plotting a future harvest of purple carrots.
Clever Trevor trying me out, checking my Gullibility Rating for accepting excuses.
Lee and Owen bubbling on and on about their grouse hunt.
Kelly bubbling on and on about learning and life (and horses).
Aslyn and Kyle and Tyler carefully crafting sentences.



I went to school to teach science, prepared to "open the students' eyes to the wonders of God's world."

I found myself in a population, a community, an ecosystem, a biome, a biosphere. . . With my own eyes opening minute-by-minute to the wonders of God's world.

Curt Gesch is doing long-term substitute teaching in Houston Christian School (B.C.) since September 8 due to an accident befalling one of the teachers. Mr. Gesch had retired from the teaching trade during the summer, but had exactly three days of retirement before returning to work on September 8.

Debating debates

Eternal Student

Peter Schuurman

"This is not a hockey game," said the Pastor, "where you come to cheer for the home team."

Yet the excitement building in my chest told me I was at a contest, and a spectacle was about to unfold. I love debates – the rhetorical volleys, the quick thinking-on-the-feet, and the wild uncertainty that comes with questions from the audience. If you think about it, debating societies have been around for millennia, where people have sharpened their argumentative skills against each other for entertainment, self-promotion, and profit. This may not be a hockey game, but it is an intellectual's sport.

The title of the evening was "Does God Exist?" and it was sponsored by a para-church group at a local university. The Pastor was representing the "theist" position, while a philosophy professor was representing the atheist position (although he referred to himself as an ag-theist, saying he was an atheist when it came to religion but agnostic when it comes to the question of whether the world came into existence under some Intentionality).

Although I did host one large debate when I was a campus minister, my preferred venue was a dialogue or panel discussion. I thought the non-competitive approach to academic investigation would be more constructive and winsome. The crowds were not nearly as big for a dialogue but the relationships forged with those present built trust and respect for the ministry. Sure these forums often came with a debating "edge" – it's something you need if differences are to be genuinely discussed. But the mutual investigation of a topic in dialogue focuses attention on the subject rather than the speakers or their organizations, and invites the audience to co-investigate rather than simply tally the rhetorical scores.

Faith in reason

On this night the debate was well-structured. Each had a 30-minute opening address and a 10-minute rebuttal with seven minutes for closing comments. Questions from the audience came before the closing comments. This order prevented shouting and clamoring for air time and the cheap shots that erupt when they don't formally exchange opportunities to speak.

The Pastor, with a British accent and a fluent style, impressed the audience with his contention that reason demands faith. If the world is an accident, he suggested, the intelligibility of the world is uncertain. Reason cannot proceed from irrationality, and so some super-rational entity is necessary to bring order and intelligibility to life. If there is no God, we cannot be sure our minds reflect anything real or reliable.

The Professor, using mostly a sardonic smile, suggested the Pastor was demonstrating his main point. He said that religion arises out of a need to explain, to have order, morality and accountability. "God" is what people use to fill in the gaps in their understanding of life. "We need to learn to think for ourselves," he declared. We don't need "a parent in the sky", priests or holy books. We need to suspend judgment, face our aloneness, and just get on with life.

In the end, in my opinion, the Pastor showed the most rhetorical skill and presented his arguments with better clarity and earnestness, yet I'm not sure his approach was as strategic as it could have been. Does reason demand we have faith, or is it faith that is the starting point? His audience was mostly postmodern youth, and I wonder if he would have been better off deconstructing reason and calling people to the beauty of faith in Christ instead. This approach would involve something closer to narrative and poetry than sheer force of logic.

Jesus, ace debater

Still, I love debates. Although it depends heavily on the ability of the debaters, a good debate can clarify issues in the contrast, open up post-mortem discussions with others in attendance, and model public speaking skills for students. Debates are one possible method of engagement – albeit a flashy, limited one.

We sometimes want to be liked and play it safe, but the New Testament does not model such behavior. Paul presented his case in contentious Athens and before Caesar's skeptical regents. Jesus himself recognized the rhetorical traps the ruling Pharisees laid for him and shot back at them with persuasive arguments, clever stories, testy questions, and even some basic ridicule. "You brood of vipers!" is hardly gentlemanly dialogue. So Christians are not called to be "nice" (coming from the Latin, meaning "stupid") – soft and mushy anti-intellectuals.

That said, we should enter debates reluctantly. As Gary Thomas says in his chapter on activists in his book *Sacred Pathways* (Zondervan, 2002), "when we differ…we do it not because we love the smell of blood, the smell of the arena, the smell of the bullfight, but because we must for God's sake." If love is the Christian's driving motive, brutal competitiveness and careless arrogance have no place. It's not hard to win an argument and lose your audience.

In his book *Humble Apologetics* (Oxford, 2002) John Stackhouse, Jr. suggests we start with listening and asking questions, recognizing that we could be wrong about any or all of what we hold true. It is the Holy Spirit that convicts hearts, and the best we can do is remove obstacles to faith and clarify the issues. Jesus may have been harsh with the religious rulers at times, but as Word-made-flesh he was "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). Truth without grace can be cold and mean, and grace without truth slips into relativism and indifference. Love requires both grace and truth.

The word of love must be en-fleshed, incarnated into our life as it was in Christ. Stackhouse summarizes, saying "apologetics is best understood as developing one's authentic self so as to present one's faith as helpfully as possible to one's neighbor… we are to become better versions of ourselves." In this way, we see apologetics as an opportunity to "win the friend, not the argument." That makes all the difference.

Peter Schuurman is the Christian Reformed Education Mission Leader and resides in Guelph, Ontario.

The Gospel According to the Beatles

New book traces Beatles' path from fun-loving moptops to shamans for a generation

Dan Wooding

LONDON, ENGLAND (ANS) – Although I was born in Nigeria, I spent my early years in the hometown of my parents, Liverpool, England, birthplace of the Beatles and years later, when I was a journalist based in London, I met both Paul and Ringo.

I can still remember seeing the "Moptops" making their first appearance on BBC Television and watching their career rocket to worldwide influence.

Imparting a gospel to a generation had not been the Beatles intent when they first got into rock & roll. They were looking for kicks, girls, and a life of leisure, not transcendence. But as British rock journalist Steve Turner shows in *The Gospel According to the Beatles* (Westminster John Knox Press, $19.95, August 2006), the Fab Four went from pop stars to shamans – from "she loves you, yeah yeah yeah" to "turn off your mind, relax and float downstream"– in the space of three years.

"Bigger than Jesus"

It was forty years ago this year, that John Lennon's comment that the Beatles were bigger than Jesus caused protests and record burnings in the U.S. Lennon was simply observing that for his generation the Beatles occupied the position traditionally held by religious leaders. The Beatles didn't aspire to be gurus, but this is the role they played from 1966-1970.

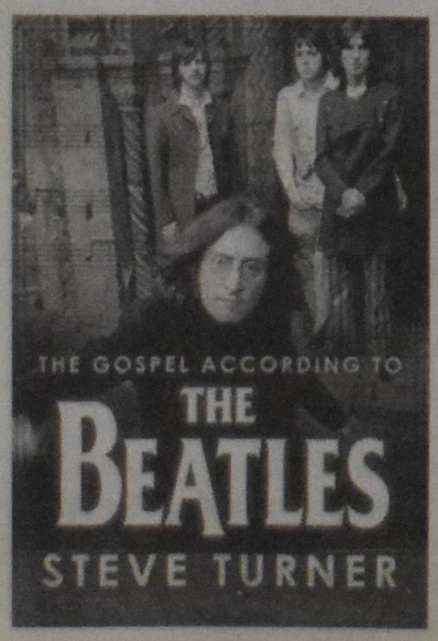
"Millions of young people smoked pot, dropped acid, investigated Eastern religions and marched for peace as a result of things the Beatles said or did," Turner says. "And it wasn't just impressionable fans but fellow artists and cultural commentators who thought of the Beatles as savior figures capable of transforming lives."

The Beatles' gospel is found in their hunger for transcendence rather than in conformity to a creed. Their "good news" was love, peace, and especially, freedom, Turner says. "The human problem in their eyes was one of limitations and constraints. We couldn't reach our full potential if we were inhibited: 'One thing I can tell you is you got to be free.'"

Their advice is always to expand the consciousness – to open up your eyes (Dear Prudence); to free your mind and change your head (Revolution); to learn to see (Blackbird); and to see beyond yourself (Within You Without You).

Turner traces the Beatles from their Liverpool childhoods to early stardom; from experimentation with hallucinogens to their disillusionment with the drug culture; and from their introduction to Eastern religions to their lives after the band broke up. He surveys the religious, spiritual and philosophical ideas – including Christianity, existentialism, Transcendental Meditation and Krishna Consciousness – that influenced the music and lives of the Beatles, and through them, their fans and succeeding generations.

The Beatles were skeptical of the Christian church, yet many of their beliefs – love, peace, hope, truth and transcendence – were secularized versions of Christian teachings. Still, the Eastern view of life took over from the rudimentary Christian outlook of their youth. God was an impersonal force rather than a personal being. They meditated rather than prayed, believed in the karmic wheel rather than heaven and hell, visited an astrologer for guidance rather than a priest.



Hallucinogenic drugs were the crucial turning point in the Beatles spiritual explorations, Turner shows. "It's unlikely that they would have been transformed from skeptical, worldly Liverpool boys who only believed what their eyes could see into mystics speaking of karma, nirvana and the coming golden age, if it hadn't been for this chemical catalyst," Turner says.

With almost 80 interviews conducted by the author, Turner offers fresh insights into some of the most notorious incidents in Beatles history, from the "more popular than Jesus" controversy to the truth about the first time they dropped acid.

Steve Turner, himself a committed Christians, has covered the rock music scene in Britain and the U.S. for more than thirty years. He is the author of several books, including the authorized biography of Johnny Cash, *A Man Called Cash.*

Human impact

Reflections on Stewardship

Rick De Graaf

Ever consider how big our 'footprint' on this earth has become? The population of the world now stands at approximately 6.6 billion people. In 2005, about 49 per cent of us lived in urban centres – up from 47 per cent in 2000. Our world is finite in size and we all need to drink and eat – both people and animals with whom we share this planet.

Some of us have access to the internet directly or maybe can access the internet through our children and grandchildren. Consider visiting the www.ecofoot.org website with your child or grandchild and work through the quiz that you'll find there. I think you'll find it an interesting learning experience that you can share.

When I took the quiz, I was shocked to learn that if everyone on this planet would and could live the way I did, we would need 5.3 planets! According to the quiz, my footprint takes up 9.5 global hectares (about 23.5 acres) which is slightly more than the average Canadian, who takes up an average 8.8 hectares (21.5 acres). Compare this to what is available – an average of 1.8 hectares of productive land for each person alive today. If everyone in our world today could live as we do as Canadians, then we would need almost five planets.

There is no doubt that our way of life makes a big footprint on our world. According to the quiz, I used up twice as much of the average available productive land (3.6 ha.) for just my goods and services alone. My shelter (1.8 ha) and mobility (1.7 ha) each took up about the global average and my food intake required 2.4 hectares. So I'm being pretty hoggish especially when I realize that for each of us who eat more than the average there must be others who eat a lot less!

Another website – www.wcs.org/humanfootprint said the following:

"Analysis of the human footprint map indicates that 83 per cent of the land's surface is influenced by one or more of the following factors: human population density greater than one person per square kilometer, within 15 km of a road or major river, occupied by urban or agricultural land uses, within two km of a settlement or a railway, and/or producing enough light to be visible regularly to a satellite at night. 98 per cent of the areas where it is possible to grow rice, wheat or maize (according to FAO estimates) are similarly influenced.

"However, human influence is not inevitably negative impact – in fact conservation organizations, including the Wildlife Conservation Society, have shown remarkable solutions that allow people and wildlife to co-exist. Nature is often resilient if given half a chance. Human beings are in the position of offering or withholding that chance."

As we reflect on the impact or footprint that we make on this world, the above comment appears somewhat optimistic. God has created a resilient world, but it is also becomes very clear that we need to do our part in conservation. The quote above talks in terms of offering a chance or "half a chance" but as Christians we talk about stewardship. We need to do our part and make choices that ultimately make a difference.

Even with the way I live, as I look for ways to be more stewardly, I find myself higher than my own country's average. What can I do about that in terms of conservation and the choices I make? These are the questions we all need to ask and address. After all, God entrusted us with his creation and he placed us here to be its stewards: to work the land and care for it (Gen. 2:15).

May God enable Christians to be leaders in environmental stewardship! We have a vested interest: we want what's best for the Master.

Stewardly Tip: Consider how you can minimize your footprint. Bigger or cheaper is not always better. Durability minimizes waste – just note how many shoddy products end up in the landfill after only a short life of use. Higher efficiency means lower energy consumption. Downsizing – using less also makes a smaller footprint on the environment. Physical activity is better for you than using mechanical means, e.g. cross country skiing versus snowmobiling, and it too leaves a smaller footprint.

Readers: Share your 'Stewardly Tips' so that we all can make better use of the resources God has entrusted to us. Submit your suggestions and contact information so that we can acknowledge your contribution or ask for more details.

Next issue: Charitable year-end giving

Rick DeGraaf works for Christian Stewardship Services in Markham, Ontario Rick's email: rickd@csservices.ca

Connecting Donors, Charities, & Ministries

50% of Canadians do not have an up-to-date Will.

Have you ever considered that your WILL is a TESTIMONY of your values and priorities?

CSS can help you develop a WILL that connects your FAITH, FAMILY AND FINANCES for maximum benefit and efficiency.

Please contact our office for a confidential visit
1-800-267-8890; admin@csservices.ca

CHRISTIAN Stewardship SERVICES

Suite 214A– 500 Alden Road
Markham, ON L3R 5H5
www.csservices.ca

Church

Christians in Bangladesh worry about mounting violence

Anto Akkara

Dhaka (ENI) – Church leaders in Bangladesh have warned about widespread violent street battles between supporters of rival political groups over the formation of an interim government ahead of general elections.

"We are really anguished over what is happening," Elgin Saha, president of the National Council of Churches of Bangladesh (NCCB), told Ecumenical News International on October 30 . "The violence has thrown life out of gear," said Saha reacting to the violence. It has led to about 20 deaths and more than 3000 people being injured after supporters of the ruling coalition and of the opposition alliance engaged in street battles.

The violence erupted on October 27 after the opposition alliance of 14 parties and the government led by outgoing Prime Minister Khaleda Zia failed to agree on who should head an interim government to oversee a general election in early 2007.

For three days, rival gangs fought with stones, wooden logs and guns while the violent protests kept traffic off the roads and businesses closed across the Muslim-majority nation.

"Democracy has not developed fully here. This shows that our political parties are trying to prove their strength by muscle power," lamented Sudhir Adhikari, a former president of the national church council.

Adhikari, a Baptist, told Ecumenical News International that the latest developments demonstrated that "life is very cheap for the political leaders who incite their cadres to attack each other".

Bangladesh President Iajuddin Ahmed announced on October 29 that he would head an interim government after the failure of the government and opposition parties to agree on a name.

However, there are fears that the president's move could trigger further violence after the main opposition party, the Awami League, failed to attend his swearing-in.

Christians are a small minority in Bangladesh accounting for 0.4 per cent of its estimated 147 million people. About 83 per cent of the nation are Muslims while Hindus and Buddhists account for the rest of the population.

African churches urge compensation for global warming damage

Fredrick Nzwili

Nairobi (ENI) – A united Christian platform of Caritas Internationalis and the All Africa Conference of Churches has urged industrialized nations to compensate poor countries for damage caused by high carbon emissions, which scientists and activists say are causing global warming.

"We are urging delegates meeting here to agree there is an urgent need for industrialized nations and their corporations to compensate poor nations for the damage inflicted by current and historical emissions of carbon," the platform said in a statement. They issued their call as the 189 Parties to the United Nations Frame-work Convention on Climate Change and 166 Parties to the Kyoto Protocol conference got underway in Nairobi on November 6.

The two-week conference, attended by an estimated 5000 participants from across the world is expected to draw up a plan to arrest a fast growing global climatic crisis.

Kivutha Kibwana, Kenya's environment minister and the conference's president said at the opening of the meeting, climate change could cause serious disruptions to economic and social activity in a scale similar to the great wars and the economic depression of the last century.

"Climate change threatens development goals for billions of world's poorest," he said.

Churches in Africa are warning adverse climatic changes could threaten the livelihoods of at least 600 million people who depend on agriculture in Africa. These people, according to the churches, had been able to forecast weather patterns, but recently the patterns have become very unpredictable.

"Climate change for us is not a theoretical matter it is a matter of survival. With declined rainfall and precipitation, rivers are not having as much water. Without enough water, we are going to become ecological refugees," Professor Jesse Mugambi, a member of the World Council of Churches working group on climate change told journalists.

Steve Sawyer, Greenpeace International, climate and Energy Policy Advisor said: "The legal, moral and political obligations of the rich countries are clear; they must dramatically reduce their emissions and at the same time be prepared to provide massive support to help the poorest countries adapt to climate change."

British bishop says climate campaign is not political, but 'spiritual'

Martin Revis

London (ENI) – Churches in Britain have joined the Stop Climate Chaos Coalition and aim to mobilize Christians to take stewardship of a threatened earth just as a critical United Nations conference on the planet is taking place in Nairobi.

On November 5 the Anglican Bishop of London, Richard Chartres, led Operation Noah campaign supporters bearing banners to a rally at London's Trafalgar Square where thousands of people gathered.

Chartres told Ecumenical News International: "This is not a political campaign. It is something that springs out of the Bible. We are all participants in the web of life. This is a deeply spiritual initiative."

Bishop Chartres in his sermon cited practical actions, such as that taken by a north London church which installed solar panels and is now contributing to the national power grid. He also announced that the (Anglican) Church of England is making a 5 million British pound investment in Impax, a fund supporting alternative energy.

The Noah initiative, sponsored by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, joined around 30 organizations that included faith-based and women's groups as well as development charities and single issue pressure groups like Surfers Against Sewage that met on the eve of the Nairobi conference which began on November 6.

After a service at the 18th century Grosvenor Chapel in London's Mayfair district, worshipers were asked to sign a climate covenant undertaking to cut carbon emissions. Those present were shown a video of floods threatening the Pacific island state of Tuvalu and read a message from the Anglican Bishop of Bangladesh, Michael Baroi, who relayed fears that if action is not taken much of his country will disappear under the sea in 40 years time.

Bishop Baroi said: "The UK government and people should raise their voice in such a way that the people in the USA, China and India hear them and pursue their government to sit together to find some solutions to the problem."

The rally followed a British government-commissioned report the preceding week in which Nicholas Stern, former chief economist at the World Bank, warned that basic elements of life were threatened by global warming and that mass displacement of populations would occur if urgent collective action was not taken to lessen the harmful effects of fossil fuels.

Airline in dispute with cross-wearing employee

Martin Revis

London (ENI) – British Airways has become embroiled in a dispute with a check-in official at Heathrow Airport in London who refused a company request to cover up the cross she was wearing around her neck.

Nadia Eweida, aged 55, who is on unpaid leave until the dispute is resolved, claims the right to display her Christian religious affiliation in a discreet way.

The cross is less than two centimetres wide, and Eweida asserted she was not being given the same rights by the company as Muslims and Sikhs, who may wear headscarves and turbans.

The BBC reported on October 25 that Eweida had rejected a compromise offer of a back-room job where she would not wear uniform or have to conceal her cross.

"Why should I have to go and hide myself in a recruitment job out of sight of passengers and uniformed colleagues?" it reported her as saying.

Earlier, British lawmaker Ann Widdecombe described the airline's policy as "crazy" and said she would boycott the airline, encouraging other travelers to follow her example.

"Please e-mail BA and tell them you will choose other airlines when flying unless they reverse their ruling," a message on her Web site www.annwiddecombemp.com stated, describing the policy as discrimination against Christians.

A spokesperson for British Airways told Ecumenical News International the matter was an internal issue which was still being considered. "Investigation is continuing and could take some weeks to resolve," he said.

In a statement the company said it did not have a policy banning the wearing of religious symbols, but its policy for several years was that they should be worn underneath the uniform. However, it stated, it was not practical for turbans and headscarves to be concealed.

German Bible in inclusive language sells out quickly

Frauke Brauns

Bielefeld, Germany (ENI) – A new translation of the Bible in inclusive language intended to do justice to women, Jews and marginalized groups has been officially launched in Germany – and is already sold out.

"It was a risk, and for a long time we did not know if we [would] meet the deadline. But we are happy and thankful for achieving this day," Hanne Koehler, head of the publishing team, said at a service in Frankfurt to celebrate the completion of the project on Reformation Day, October 31 .

The new translation was undertaken during five years by 42 women and 10 men, and it aims to tone down violent language while also taking into account the perspectives of feminist and liberation theology. It makes reference to female as well as male disciples, apostles and deacons.

"A Bible in the German language has to be sensitive about racism and ethnic discrimination because of the Shoah [Holocaust]," Luise Metzler, who raised 400,000 euros to finance the project, told Ecumenical News International.

The first edition of the Bible with 20,000 copies has already sold out, the German Protestant news agency epd reported.

Still, the project has sparked debate with some critics saying the translation distorts the message of the Bible. But Bishop Baerbel Wartenberg-Potter said the continuing debate was stimulating interest in the Scriptures. "The Bible is not a museum but a living book," she said.

Launch of Christian party in Kenya worries some church leaders

Fredrick Nzwili

Nairobi, 2 November (ENI) –The launch of a Christian political party in Kenya has triggered a national debate, with some church leaders and politicians warning that its formation could further divide the East African country which has been fighting government corruption for decades.

"The Church is supposed to be the conscience of society. When Kenyans are misled, it should provide guidance, but not take leadership," the Rev. Wellington Sanga, the secretary of the Methodist Church of Kenya, told Ecumenical News International in Nairobi on 2 November.

MASAI boys in Kenya

"We're opposed to the churches moving to take over parliament and government. Our role should be like in the Old Testament where prophets rebuked the leaders who led people astray," said Sanga, noting that Kenyan laws require the separation of State and religion. He added that Christian leaders in politics had failed to be shining role models for the people.

On 28 October, the Rev. David Githii, moderator of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA), who backs a campaign for "the rule of God", led some church leaders and politicians in launching the Agano (Covenant) Party. Agano and another three parties sympathetic to Christian ideals, are seeking to have "200 people of integrity" voted into parliament.

Roman Catholic, Methodist and Anglican leaders are opposed to the development, but the PCEA, Evangelical and Pentecostal leaders back the formation of a Christian political bloc. They assert that the ongoing political injustices signal clearly that the time for ungodly rule is over, and God is ready to bring in theocratic rule.

Catholic Bishop Martin Kivuva of Machakos was quoted in the Standard newspaper of November 1 warning, "If we go that way, all churches will start forming parties and I don't think this is the right move because it will be impossible to engage political leaders." Still, Kivuva said Christians could vote for an individual candidate who agreed with their aspirations.

US Catholic bishops speak up for Iraqi religious minorities

The chair of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on International Policy has asked American Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to consider measures that would help improve the deteriorating situation for Christians and other religious minorities in Iraq.

In a letter to Dr Rice, Bishop Thomas G. Wenski of Orlando, Florida, notes that Christians in Iraq continue to decline from a pre-war population of over 1.2 million to a current estimate of 600,000.

According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, over 40 per cent of Iraqi refugees are Christian even though they represent only about four per cent of Iraq's total population.

"The growing and deliberate targeting of Christians is an ominous sign of the breakdown in Iraqi society of civil order and inter-religious respect and represents a grave violation of human rights and religious liberty," Bishop Wenski wrote.

He pointed to the recent beheading of a Syriac Orthodox priest in Mosul, the crucifixion of a Christian teenager in Albasra, the kidnapping for ransom of four priests and the rape of Christian women and teenage girls as indicators that the situation has reached a crisis point.

"The vulnerability of Christians and other religious minorities is dramatic evidence of the serious and growing security challenges facing the entire nation of Iraq," Bishop Wenski declared.

In order to improve the particular security situation of Christians and other minorities in Iraq, he urged the US government to consider the creation of a new Administrative Region in the Nineveh Plain Area that would be directly related to the central government in Baghdad.

Since the Kurds play a key role in stabilizing Iraq, Bishop Wenski urged the US government to work with Kurdish authorities to ensure the safety of Christians in the Plain of Nineveh and to provide protection and assistance for religious minorities in areas directly under Kurdish control.

An urgent review of economic reconstruction aid programs is also needed, he said, to ensure that aid is distributed fairly so that all elements of Iraqi society are able to rebuild their communities. Finally, Bishop Wenski called for the US government to adopt a more generous refugee and asylum policy, including the possible resettlement of at-risk cases to the United States.

Christians look to dialogue with Islamic group in Somalia

Fredrick Nzwili

Nairobi (ENI) – Christian leaders in Africa have suggested opening talks with the Union of Islamic Courts which controls most of the southern part of the Somalia and is challenging a transitional government that is itself struggling to assert control.

"I believe they will listen to us, if we moved there in a very humble way, not with the idea of evangelization. We will need to say, we want to know how you [Islamic courts] want us to accompany you," said Melaku Kifle from the Geneva-based World Council of Churches.

"We have the responsibility to take the first step," Kifle told Ecumenical News International following a meeting this week in the Kenyan capital to discuss how churches could help end the conflict in Somalia.

Fears have been expressed that the conflict will become a regional conflagration with neighboring Ethiopia and Eritrea pitching in on opposite sides.

Somalia has had no effective government since the overthrow of President Siad Barre in 1991. A peace agreement between rival groups was brokered in 2004, leading to the formation of the transitional government, but it has been unable to assert control over the territory.

Agnes Abuom, from Kenya, who is accompanying churches in the Horn of Africa on behalf of the WCC, said the Christian groups first needed to understand Somalia, where they had no "natural contact". The country's estimated 8.8 million people are almost entirely Muslim.

Still, Abuom noted, "There are a few church related bodies doing some humanitarian peace work. We have been searching how we can work with them."

Helmut Hess, the Africa representative of the German church development agency, Bread for the World, welcomed the readiness of churches to take responsibility.

"The situation is really worrying," he said. "It seems to escalate very quickly. Something needs to be done."

Nuns in Philippines angered at police raid on convent

Maurice Malanes

Manila (ENI)–A Philippines Roman Catholic group sees "a pattern of persecution of church people" after police, who said they were looking for a communist leader, raided a convent of meditating nuns in Southern Philippines.

"In the name of this all-out war, even members of the Church are not spared the brutish force of the government," the Sisters Association in Mindanao said in a November 4 statement. "The police are so brazen they could violate the sanctity of the convent and the right and privacy of the sisters."

Bishop Juan de Dios Pueblos of Butuan condemned as illegal the November 1 raid by police on the convent of the Contemplative Sisters of the Good Shepherd in Ampayon, Butuan City, some 750 kilometres (about 465 miles) southeast of Manila.

"They [the police] admitted their mistakes so they should take the consequences for what they did," Bishop Pueblos was quoted saying on the Web site of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines.

The Good Shepherd congregation filed a complaint before the country's Commission on Human Rights over the "brazen raid and illegal searches" inflicted by police on nuns.

Seven armed police officers led by a Colonel Wilfredo Reyes raided the convent on the pretext of arresting Jorge Madlos, who authorities said was hiding inside the convent. Madlos has been named as a spokesperson of the National Democratic Front, an underground group.

Sister Geraldine Ortuoste, the convent's acting coordinator, reported that the police knocked down the convent gate and forced their way in, ransacking nuns' rooms. When they found Madlos was not there, the police left. The nuns said the police apologized the following day with "peace offerings" of fruits and canned goods.

Police stop IFI clergy and lay faithful, and their supporters, during their Oct. 12 symbolic funeral march for slain Bp. Alberto Ramento

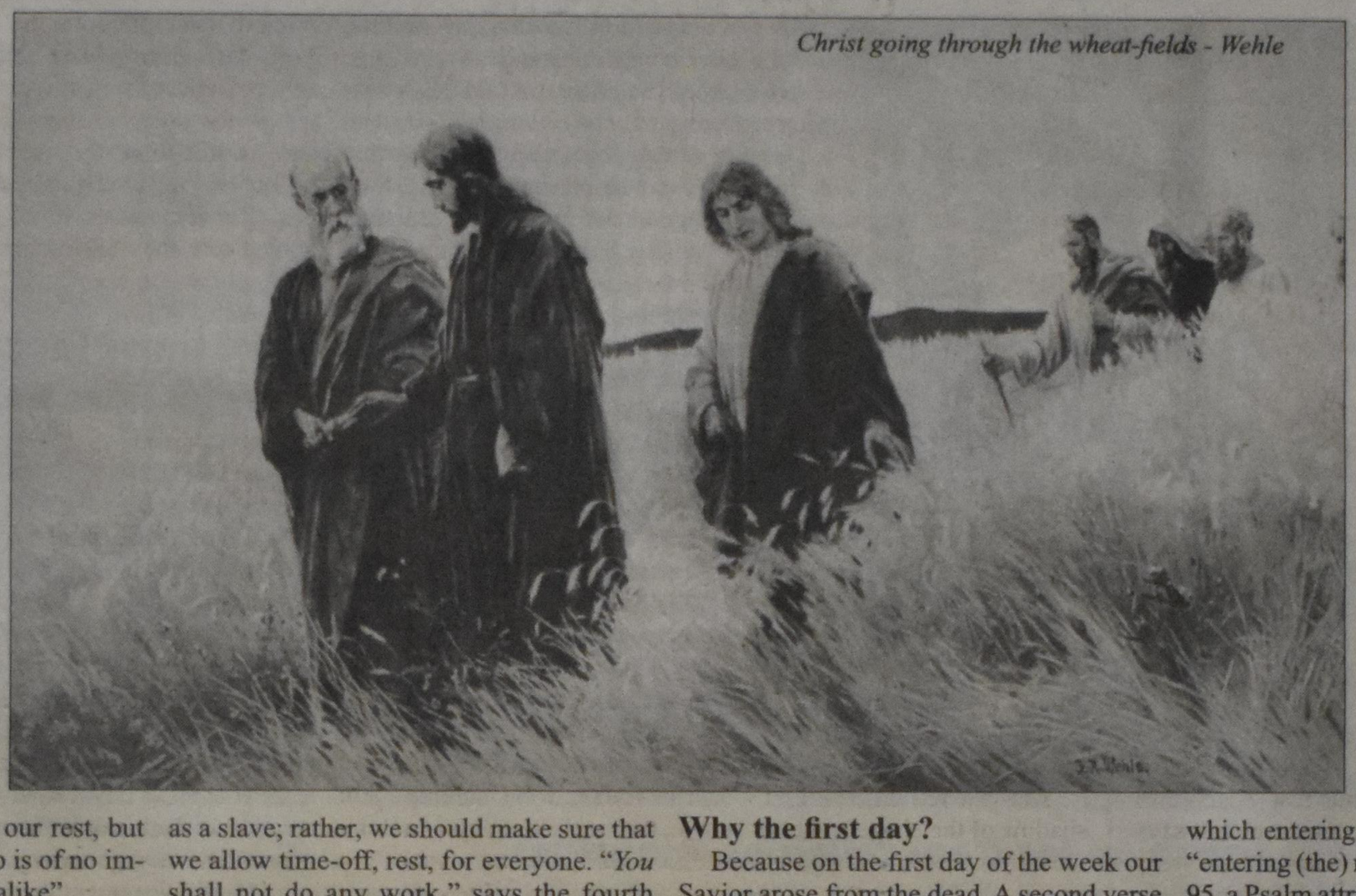
But Sister Maureen Catabian, Good Shepherd spokes-person, said the nuns were being harassed. "We strongly condemn this pattern of deliberate and systematic intimidation and harassment by instruments of the government," she said in a statement.

Archbishop Oscar Cruz of Lingayen said he saw "a pattern of harassment and murders of church workers," as he referred to the still unsolved killing of Philippine Independent Church Bishop Alberto Ramento.

Sabbath

No more Sabbath?

William Vander Beek



Christ going through the wheat-fields - Wehle

Sabbath? you ask. But that was in the *Old* Testament. Then the people of Israel were commanded to set aside the seventh day of their week as a day of rest. But we of the *New* Testament, we are past that old law, aren't we? Since we are believers in Jesus Christ, and live in the New Testament era, we have nothing more to do with the Sabbath, right?

In fact, for us – as we sang in our camps and conferences – every day "every day is a day of the Lord, a Kingdom day, hallelujah!" There is truth in that: our every day is to be devoted to the Lord and the Kingdom. Yet to many people this means that for us no one day needs to be set aside from the others. Of course, we have to make sure that we still get our rest, but what day of the week we do so is of no importance. "To us every day is alike".

Carrying that idea further, this means that in our modern society not only do we ignore the old Sabbath, but neither do we attach special sacredness to the Sunday anymore. It is for many in our nation just a "free" day, a fun part of our "weekend" (what a mis-nomer!). Churches obtain discounts for urging their members to have a good brunch in a restaurant on Sunday!

So, is there no more special sabbath-like day in the New Testament? Is every day alike for us? Many of us older ones remember certain, rather strict, traditions our homes observed in preparation of the Sunday: most of Sunday dinner was prepared on Saturday; the shoes for Sunday were polished on Saturday; and the clothes for Sunday checked and made ready. We did not buy anything on Sunday. And did not "eat out" if at all possible. We liked our mothers to have it easier on Sunday as well. And we tried not to force others to work while we observed Sunday. These were voluntary restrictions, but they did help to keep Sunday as more of a day of rest.

Must we scoff at all that today?

As you know, The Ten Commandments (including the sabbath-commandment) are given not only in Ex. 20:8-11, but repeated in Deuteronomy 5:12ff. But the *reason* why we are called to keep the Sabbath is different in Deuteronomy than in Exodus. Deut. 5:15 presents the motivation for Sabbath-keeping in this way, "Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God commanded you to observe the Sabbath day".

God demands that no one has to work as a slave; rather, we should make sure that we allow time-off, rest, for everyone. "*You* shall not do any work," says the fourth commandment, "nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant so that your manservant and maidservant may rest, as you do." These old traditions may seem legalistic to us now, and we are not bound by the precise form we gave them in the past, but they were motivated by a very biblical principle: Love your neighbor as yourself. And that principle holds true forever.

* * * *

When we read the New Testament, we learn that in the early church special significance *was* attached to a certain day; and that day was the first day of every week.

In 1 Corinthians 16:2 the apostle Paul exhorts the believers in Corinth to follow the good example of the churches in Galatia, who collect money for needy churches. So what does the apostle urge them to do? "Each of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, so that when I come no collection will have to be made."

Sound advice, right? Prepare for when I come by setting aside some money every week. But Paul does not say: just pick your own weekday on which to do that. No, do it "on the first day of every week." He is not talking about church-attendance here; no, they may do it at home.

So why does it matter on what day they do it? Why "on the first day of every week"? If, as so many people think, all days are alike, then it should not matter on which day this is done. But the first day of the week *did* have a special meaning for the early Christians. That's why very soon after our Lord ascended to glory they tried to get together for worship on that day outside of their work hours, until – a few centuries later – the first day was set aside for worship and rest.

Why the first day?

Because on the first day of the week our Savior arose from the dead. A second verse of importance in this context is Rev. 1:10, where the apostle John reports, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day." On that day he started receiving the special visions related in the book of Revelation. It does not even say which day that was, because they all understood this name to refer to the day of the Lord's Resurrection. So, in some sense "every day is a day of the Lord," as I stated earlier, and yet the first day of our every week, the one we call Sunday, deserves the title *the Lord's Day*, for it is that in a heightened sense. For all Christians it ought to be a special day.

Don't think that the shift from the seventh to the first day of the week has nothing to do with the Sabbath. For you see, the first day of the week is for us the day of the *fulfilled* Sabbath. It signifies that Jesus Christ fulfilled the purpose which God had foreshadowed in the Ten Commandments by setting aside the last day of the week, *as if we ourselves could bring about that day by our own work!* But because of our imperfection and sin we could never really do what God requires of us in the fourth commandment. Do *all* our work, and do it *perfectly*? Impossible! But Jesus Christ came to do the work that we could not do! The Old Sabbath merely foreshadowed what Christ would come to do. The old Sabbath was prophetically pointing forward to the only One who could give us *true rest*. And so when his work was finished, death just could not hold him in the grave anymore (see Acts 2:24). So we celebrate "The Lord's Day" as the fulfilment of the Sabbath. That's why it should be special.

And, yes, worship services are special; and we should be faithful participants. But there are many among our members who are unable to attend worship services, for reasons of age and health, or as caregivers, or doing necessary work (police, firefighters, medical staff). Even when we are at home or in an institution we must seek ways to rejoice in the Lord's victory, to tell him how thankful we are for his salvation, and for his glory which we have begun, in some initial way, to share. The annual *Easter Day* is a human invention. But the weekly Sabbath on the first day of the week is his in a special way. *Sunday is our weekly Easter day!*

* * * *

What is the sabbath?

A foretaste of our eternal rest.

There is a Psalm in which entering the promised land is called "entering (the) rest." I am referring to Psalm 95, a Psalm attributed to David. It recalls the rebellious people who wandered in the wilderness for 40 years and died there. About them God had said, "They shall never enter my rest".

But Canaan is not the *promised* land any more. Israel had lived there for centuries already, when Psalm 139 was written. So, when David promises that it is still possible to enter the "rest," he sees another land of rest on the horizon. And, much later again, the author writing to the Hebrews devotes 3:7 - 4:11 to urge New Testament believers not to harden their hearts as the wilderness generation did, but to hear God's voice inviting them to enter God's rest.

That open invitation gives wonderful encouragement for us, too. Sure, there will be a time when God calls an end to that 'Today' for you and me, and eventually for every living being; but as long as the gospel goes out, all are called to take up his invitation and enter the rest.

What rest?

"My rest," God says.

Ah, the author to the Hebrews wants to let those two words – "My Rest"– sink deep into everyone's heart. And he realizes that God's Word here means more than "the rest which God will provide for us." That promised rest is God's rest in a much deeper sense.

Hebrews 4:3b and 4 explains that "My rest" refers back to God creating all things in six days and then resting on the seventh day. Here again we are reminded that the Sabbath does not disappear in the New Testament. Verse 3b reads "and yet his work has been finished since the creation of the world." And the writer adds: "For somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day in the

words, 'And on the seventh God rested from all his work'" That is in Gen. 2:2 and 3. So when God says, "My rest," he calls attention the rest that he, the Creator of all things, has already enjoyed since the earliest beginning of history.

On first reading, Psalm 95 does not seem to be dealing with the Sabbath. But before the author is finished he makes sure that we know it is the Sabbath he is urging us to enter. To enter God's rest means to share in the rest God entered on the seventh day of creation. In fact, to make sure we know that he is talking about the ultimate fulfillment of the Sabbath, the author coins what seems to be a new word (4:9) "sabbatismos". The word "Sabbath" is clearly the root of that new word. "There remains then a Sabbath rest for the people of God"; therefore it is a wonderful thing that he invites us, to join him and share his rest.

The old seventh-day Sabbath of the fourth commandment may have changed when Christ arose, but, as we now see, the concept of Sabbath is much older, much broader and much more enduring than what was said on Mt Sinai. Do you still wonder whether it is right to connect our entering his rest with "our rest"? Hebrews makes the connection clear when the author says "for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, ***as God did from his"*** (Heb. 4:10). Here the connection is spelled out for all of us.

Gen. 2 told us what the final purpose of creation was and is: that his people may finally join him and enter his rest. Yes, this section of Hebrews ends with a warning, "Let us, therefore make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience" (4:11). But when you see that God himself beckons us to join him in his eternal rest, I am very glad to take him up on his invitation?

Yes, the message of the Sabbath day is a message for every day. The writers of the Heidelberg catechism saw that very well, for Answer 103 reads, "*Second, that every day of my life* I rest from my evil ways, let the Lord work in me through his Spirit, and so begin in this life the eternal sabbath."

One way in which we must "in this life begin the eternal sabbath" is to start every new week with a remembrance of the Sabbath, as our Savior fulfilled it for us. For we ourselves could not keep the Sabbath, no matter how hard we struggled toward having a rest at the end of the week. No, the fourth commandment was really about what Christ would accomplish for us. And he did. And so now we may start every week rejoicing that, unlike the believers in the Old Testament, who were not allowed into God's very presence, where only the high priest was allowed and that only once a year, we now have free access into God's presence, eternally. And the Lord's Day is set aside for us to remember that, with joy and anticipation.

Don't ever forget the Sabbath – for beyond the fourth commandment Sabbath, there is God's creation-Sabbath, and by his grace in Jesus Christ, our eternal Sabbath.

Intangible Things

Heidi VanderSlikke

A difficult harvest

They said on the news the other day that this has been "the most difficult harvest in twenty-five years for Ontario farmers." I believe it. But Thanksgiving is a time of celebration, so even before I was sure we would get the soybeans and corn off the fields, I booked a cottage near Meaford for the weekend, hoping to spend some time with our family, away from the farm. James and Willene weren't able to join us, but Stephanie and Jessica were coming. I shopped carefully, planning to prepare a turkey dinner with all the fixings away from home. I packed my good table cloth, candles and fancy napkins.

Saturday afternoon was bright and sunny, although not overly warm. The forecast for the rest of the weekend was promising. The girls loaded the food and suitcases into the Jetta, while Jack and I bundled up in full gear to ride our motorbikes through the splendor of Grey County's back roads. Riding along I considered what a blessing it was to enjoy the sights and scents of autumn in the middle of a busy season.

After supper that evening Stephanie, Jess and I wandered through the marina. Couples strolled hand in hand down the pier. People walked their dogs. My daughters and I talked quietly, admiring the various sailboats and yachts moored in their places. There was no breeze, just a twilight hush over the marina.

The last red embers of the sun silhouetted the hulking shadow of the Niagara escarpment on the western skyline. In the other direction a huge harvest moon rose over the placid waters of Georgian Bay. The giant golden disk posed beside the lighthouse for a few minutes. I wished out loud that I had brought my camera, knowing even as I said it, no photograph could do justice to the beauty of this moment. We stood at the end of the pier, looking out over the rocks. The moon continued to rise, its reflection now a shining pathway on the water's surface. And I knew we were standing in the midst of a work of art, a testimony to its creator. His signature surrounded us – the Great I Am is here, I thought.

I got up early the next morning, pulled on a heavy sweatshirt and took my coffee with me to the old stone patio that looks out over the water. A couple of sailboats and a fishing tug decorated the horizon. Basking in the silence I turned my face toward the rising sun and thought about my mother. A few weeks before, Jack and I had sat in the garden of the nursing home with her. From time to time she turned her tanned face upward and closed her eyes. The breeze ruffled her grey curls and she smiled, the picture of contentment. Funny, even though she was wasting away in front of our eyes, her smile came easier these days than it had in years.

Sunday afternoon we rode to Beaver Valley. We wound our way down Bowles Hill Road, through a canopy of gold, orange, brown and scarlet. At a stop sign I looked up at the escarpment in its finery, the breathtakingly blue sky overhead. I felt small. I Am, again – in all his Glory, I thought. We drove on, heading back toward Meaford, through the rolling countryside, the deep blue bay ahead of us. I began to think of words to describe the vista in front of me: magnificent, awesome, incredible, gorgeous, spectacular, exquisite. I was no longer thinking of the creation, but of the Creator. I suddenly realized I had no adequate words to describe either. What a perfect day.

We were clearing the dishes from the supper table when Jack's cell phone rang. "Oh hi, Laila," he said. It had to be something serious for my sister-in-law to be calling. With a grim expression he handed the phone over. Laila told me that my mother had been admitted to the hospital around 5:00 p.m. Her blood pressure had suddenly dropped that afternoon and she was fading fast.

We made plans to head for home at once. The girls cleaned up the kitchen while Jack and I packed.

Ordinarily I would have been uneasy about riding home on a dark, cold night, especially through such heavily wooded areas. But as we drove up the escarpment I glanced at the sunset and knew this trip would be okay. I prayed, thanking God for the reminder of his presence, not just in the beautiful day behind us, but in the darkness ahead. I prayed for my mom. I wondered if this would be the end, or if she might pull through as she had on numerous other occasions. Two hours later we were home.

Hilde Brutscher
February 8, 1924 – October 8, 2006

My brother answered the phone when I called his house. "Oma passed away at 7:35," he said. I sat in silence after hanging up. Stephanie and Jessica were side by side on the sofa, tears streaming down their cheeks. James and Willene came as soon as Jack called them, as did my mother-in-law. Surrounded in the living room by people I love, I felt a strange mixture of thankfulness and pain.

I lay in bed that night staring at the ceiling. I thought Jack was asleep until I heard his voice in the dark, "What are you thinking?" Fighting back the lump in my throat I answered, "I'll never see my mother again." Hot tears spilled out of the corners of my eyes. I tossed and turned for awhile, then finally went downstairs. I tried to journal, but no words came. My mind ricocheted from one thought to another. I poured a glass of red wine and recalled my last visit with Ma, the week before.

It had been too cold to sit outside, so we sipped coffee in the atrium instead. I looked at her frail body sitting there and wondered how much thinner she could possibly get. We talked about summer and winter, and the holidays she took with my father in Barbados. When it was time to leave I hoisted her out of the chair and steadied her behind her walker. She shuffled along beside me until we came to her favorite spot by the nursing home entrance. I helped her down into the chair and kissed her cheek. "I love you, Ma," I said. She answered, "I love you, too," then smiled and added, "But you know that."

I finished my wine and went back to bed. Silently I told God how much it hurt, but how thankful I was that I didn't have to go through this alone. I love you, Lord. I turned onto my side and gazed through the window at the smiling face of the full moon. I love you, too, it seemed to say, but you know that.

A month has passed. I am adjusting to the world without my mother, learning again that grief is not a linear process. You can't systematically work through bereavement and then one day proclaim, "I'm done." That being said, I do not grieve as one who has no hope. The harvest is complete. The days are getting shorter and winter is coming on. But through all the seasons of life I have the overwhelming assurance that the Great I Am is with me. He remains the Father of Lights, the giver of every good and perfect gift, the one who puts the sun to bed on one horizon, while at the same time illuminating the night sky with his harvest moon.

Heidi VanderSlikke lives in Harriston, Ont.
Her email: hmvanderslikke@ hotmail.com

The simple truth about church growth (Part 2)

David snapper

Greetcha and Mary greet cordially at Grandmother's house after Sunday worship. Mary beams broadly as she lithely waltzes through grandmother's traditional parlor. She hums softly to herself.

Greetcha, in contrast, sinks wearily into her traditional spot in the overstuffed chair that belonged to Grandfather before the stroke took his life ten year ago.

Mary's cheerful humming annoys Greetcha for reasons that she cannot quite explain, but her set jaw and strained smile are evident to all if the harsh clattering of her spoon against grandmother's fine china is not warning enough.

"Oh," beams Mary, "Today's worship brought me to the throne of God. The Praise Band and the liturgical dancing reminded me of angels praising God. Oh, and then – did I tell you already, Greetcha? – we had three baptisms from the community today. Three! Oh, if we keep growing like this we'll have to build a new sanctuary."

Greetcha grimaces but manages a sneer that is supposed to be a smile. "Dat's gud, Mary. But I tenk you tolt me all dis before."

Her resistance inspires Mary further.

"Oh, Greetcha, don't be so benout – or whatever it is that you say in Dutch. When we left Old First Church to plant a new church in the suburbs, who could imagine what a blessing it would be. And young pastor Bob from Iowa – you know, we call him "pastor Bob" – he's so lively and inspirational. It's no wonder we had three – three! – baptisms today."

Greetcha, beneath the chalky rouge, pinks-up with her natural colors as she considers a reply to Mary. Offended, insulted and overtaken by the upstart congregation, the worshipers at Old First feel frustrated.

Maybe they should not have allowed the younger generation to move to the suburbs.

Maybe they should have allowed a praise band in Old First.

"Ja, and maybe the sermon were a little long sometimes. Ja, and sometimes not too interesting. Old Dominee VanderBackwater could be as long a winter in January."

"Maybe Old First should call a young pastor, a kid fresh out of seminary to shake things up." Or… Greetcha closed her eyes and wondered, "Maybe a woman pastor. Now, wouldn't that be something! Maybe that would fix Old First's declining worship attendance."

Greetcha silently endures the shame of her status as the "older generation" listening to the wondrous tales of Mary's experiences at the New Life and Hope Covenant Community Center for Worship and You – the NLHCCCWF&Y.

What is Greetcha to do?

Greetcha and Mary and many other people believe that church membership is caused by very simple factors, such as the energetic preaching of "pastor Bob," or the contemporary syncopation of the Praise Band wailing the latest tunes. Others attribute growth to new buildings. Or pitching the tired Catechism sermon. Or moving Sunday School to after worship instead of before. Some hope that a catchy name will enhance community presence.

Much as Greetcha and Mary believe that they can identify the causes for membership growth at NLHCCCWF&Y, so too, we've believed, at one time or another, that just about anything can be the deciding factor for church vitality, size, outreach effectiveness and prestige.

In two previous articles I outlined some commonly overlooked factors in church growth – the roles of "clusters" and the "demographics" that are printed in the CRC's Yearbook. In this article I hope to examine some of the most influential factors surrounding church size and growth in the CRC.

Let's look at the real causes.

One-Generation Wonders

Mary and Greetcha may never have heard of the term "One-Generation Wonders" as a description of a church. It's a shame because Greetcha is worshiping in a One-Generation Wonder that is at the end of its life cycle. Mary is worshiping in a One-Generation Wonder at the start of its life cycle.

The accompanying church membership charts amply illustrate the dynamics of the One-Generation congregations common in Grand Rapids, Michigan and other urban areas where there is a high concentration of CRC people.

In the One-Generation Wonder congregations you see a rapid rate of growth at the outset, a long period of relative stability in sizes, followed by a sharp and irreversible decline in membership. The entire process requires about 60 to 70 years, though that time can vary with circumstances.

My estimate is that about one-fifth, 20 per cent, of CRC church members in the United States worship in a One-Generation Wonder.

These are the Phases of the One-Generation Wonder.

A. The **Planting and Organization** occurs at about 50 members families, or, about 200 souls. Church researchers routinely measure the average size congregation in the United States at about 75 souls. These churches organize at about triple the size of the average congregation in the US.

B. The **Initial Growth Phase** lasts a decade or more and is typically 10 to 20 families per year with a final size of 200 to 400 families. A typical church of this type was between 1000 and 1500 souls in earlier generations.

Recently the congregations are somewhat smaller, on average, largely due to smaller family sizes.

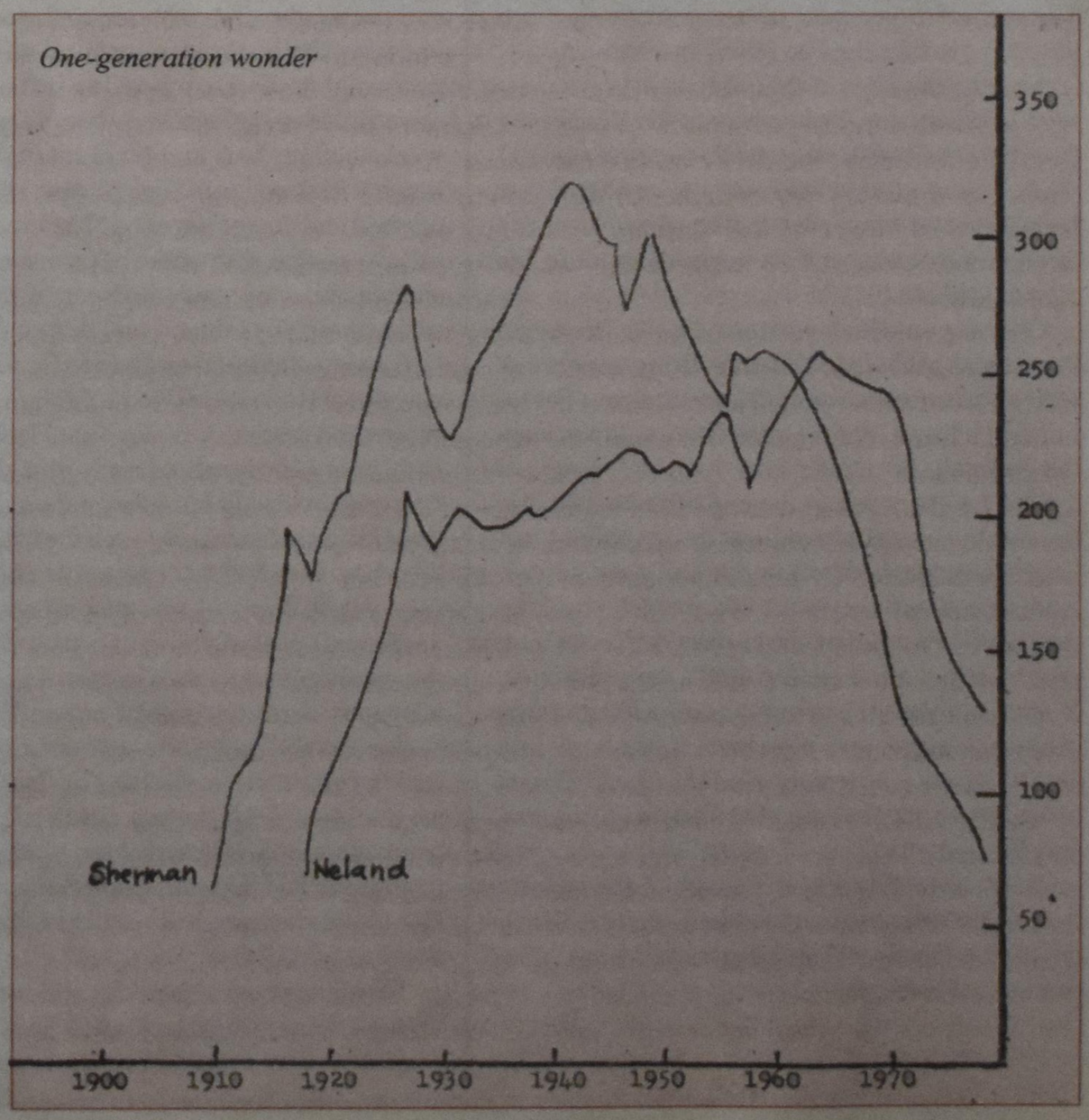
It is very common that few (up to two per cent) of the members are converts.

C. The **Plateau Phase** follows the initial growth. The Plateau Phase is the point at which the worship building has been filled and the congregations will not build a new facility. Rather than a rapid growth, the congregation develops a reduced growth as determined new members squeeze into the remaining seats. On the chart, the Plateau Phase appears as a "left shoulder."

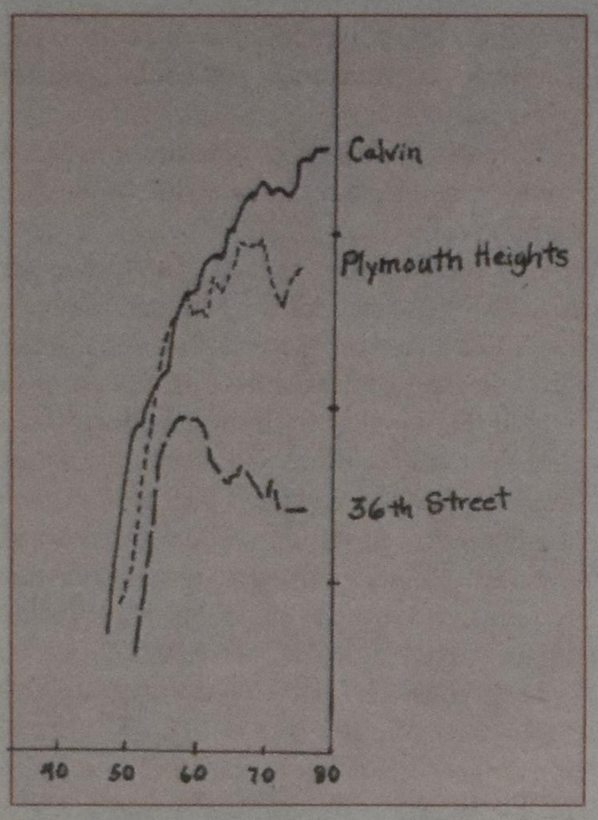
D. The **Death Spiral Phase** occurs about forty years after the date of organization and is often recognizable as a second sharp turn in the graph – this time downward. While "Death Spiral" may have an emotional connotation, the Death Spiral Phase is recognized by objective criteria: – a prolonged negative growth (10-20 years) – at about the same rate as the earlier positive growth (10 families per year) – starting 40 years after the end of the rapid growth rate.

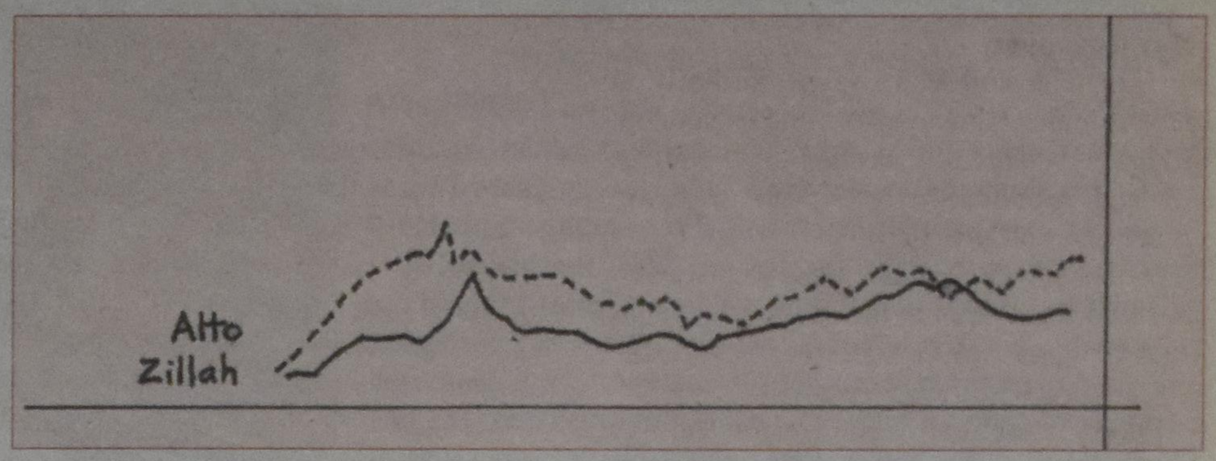
In the Death Spiral the number of children per family drops to less than one child per family, the number of professing members per family rises to three or more. This "gray" congregation has no prospects of growing more children or attracting young families.

E. A few congregations do recover from a Death Spiral. As mentioned earlier, Neland



Church growth





Avenue and Sherman Street have stabilized or recovered their ministries after Death Spirals.

These rare congregations generally survive as "commuter" congregations. Others survive as students move into cheaper housing or as young professional gentrify the urban area.

Having seen these few charts, can you agree with Mary and Greetcha that a simple fix would change the course of history for these congregations? Would a name change? Or a Praise Band? The answer, of course, is: No! The One-Generation Wonder is subject to processes more powerful than the benefits offered by quick fixes and simple programs.

CRC Clusters – Hothouse Babies

Let's take a trip to the Suburbs to meet Mary's new congregation, the New Life and Hope Covenant Community Center for Worship & You. Mary is proud of the name: "It hardly even sounds like a, well, you know, like a ... church!"

The accompanying congregational membership charts amply illustrate the dynamic first years of a new church aptly situated in a CRC Cluster. Any one of them could be Mary's church.

Calvin CRC, in the second graph, represents this category of congregational growth. Some will recognize three important facts about Calvin:

1. Date of Origin: after World War II.
2. Location: about 1000 feet from the old Calvin College and Seminary campus
3. Community: the large CRC Cluster (southeast Grand Rapids)

Calvin CRC benefited from proximity to Calvin College and Seminary, a surprise to no one. In addition to a prime location, Calvin benefited from the ministry of a fine pastor and strong leaders. This optimal environment is comparable to the hothouse for spring flowers – the ideal conditions.

In some respects the Hothouse Church is similar to the One-Generation Wonder congregation. True. But here is the difference. The Hothouse Church is growing at the expense of a nearby congregation. The Hothouse Church gains its members by transfer.

Calvin CRC grew, of course, in concert with the college staff and students who soon filled the neighborhood of the rapid post-war attendance boost.

The additional graphs demonstrate the dynamic early growth phases of representative Hothouse Churches as they draw their membership from a nearby One-Generation Wonder.

In other words, these charts illustrate the process of cloning a congregation from one location to another. What appears to be growth is mostly membership transfer from the One-Generation Wonder.

Some characteristics of Hothouse Churches

Hothouse Churches are located in the nearest new suburbs of a large CRC cluster, such as western Michigan, areas in Chicago, and a few other locations.

Hothouse Churches grow from the migration of (mostly) young couples who are unable to find suitable housing in their childhood neighborhoods near the home church.

Hothouse Churches are characterized by high numbers of baptized children per family and a ratio of professing members per household that suggests most household are young, married couples.

Hothouse Churches may come into existence for normal reasons of growth or for negative reasons such as urban flight.

Authors of Church Growth Literature insist that newer congregations evangelize more people than do long-time existing congregations. While that claim may be partly true, I can tell you, based on 25 years of detailed research, that the Hothouse Churches rarely add more than a few percent of converts during their growth phase. These are mostly transfer-growth, Hot-House Congregations.

It is my estimate that about 15 - 20 per cent of CRC members in the United States worship in a Hothouse Church.

Think again of Mary and Greetcha. Do you suppose that this pattern of dramatic church growth for an entire group of churches (i.e. suburban migration) is explained by the fact that all these congregations were providentially led to the best pastors, the right music, the most opportune names, and the right street corner? Or is it easier to believe that these congregational growth rates are explained by other sociological factors, such as urban migration?

Rural Congregations

The city of Grand Rapids is dramatic. Well, its church growth patterns are dramatic, in any case. However, not all congregations exist in the drama of the large CRC cluster. Rural Congregations, for one example, experience significantly different growth patterns.

The charts tracing the growth of rural congregations represent some of my favorite churches. If you can imagine that I am flipping the pages of 80 antique *Yearbooks*, dated 1901 to 1978, wondering what will happen to the churches whose vital statistics I am reading. Before long I start to really care about Zillah and Alto. Alto and Zillah?

I initially chose Alto and Zillah because their names were the first and the last, the alpha and the omega, in the first *Yearbook* I opened. It seemed a random approach, and therefore "scientific" and vaguely theological. Over the years I have come to have a deep respect and compassion for each rural congregation. I hope it is clear that my goal is to enhance that same respect in your thinking.

Zillah, Alto, Portland, Lodgepole, Red Deer, the congregations on PEI – and many additional rural congregations – differ from the Hothouse Church and the One-Generation Wonders in the following ways:

Some characteristics of rural congregations

Rural congregations rarely grow at a rate of more than two or three families per year (compared to twenty or thirty for Hothouse Churches.)

Rural congregations have outlasted generations of members. That is, the life span of a rural congregation normally is longer than the sixty to eighty years of the One-Generation Wonders.

Rural congregations rarely grow to a size larger than 100 member families.

As we have seen, Hothouse Churches routinely grow at ten to twenty families per year for a decade or more as members transfer to the new church from a city congregation. Contrasting that, in the isolated and rural settings there is no "city church" to nurse the new congregation to maturity and full size. Somehow, the isolated rural church manages to find its niche, set roots and provide ministry for long periods of time.

The Rural Church growth may be imperceptible for a decade or more. Trends and patterns of growth do not really exist – not that I can discover.

You recall that the Hothouse Churches and the One-Generation Wonders began with 50 member families – about 200 souls. Notice that all of these Rural congregations are below or just barely above the 50-family mark, even after decades of ministry. This difference in startup patterns must not be minimized.

A little respect for the rural church

It is commonly stated that a new church needs to reach 200 members within two years of time or it never will. I call this the "2-2-2 rule" – 200 members, two- years, or too bad for you!

While the 2-2-2 rule is legitimate in the southeast and southwest suburbs of Grand Rapids, it is not in rural areas. It is the rare occasion when a rural congregation reaches 200 even in 10 years.

Rural Rules and Urban Rules are not the same. A lot of damage has been done as people apply Urban Rules and benchmarks to the Rural Church.

We hope that no one believes that a few praise choruses and other changes to worship will transform a Rural Congregation into a Hothouse Church. It just won't happen.

"Harstikke bedankt, hoor, Dominee Snapper"

The dangers that threaten human existence

Whoever quarries stones may be injured by them;
whoever splits logs may be endangered by them.

Ecclesiastes 10:9

Machu Picchu, sometimes called the "Lost City of the Incas" in Peru

A. A. van Ruler

This passage is not suggesting that everyone who quarries stones will be injured by them but rather that this is a possibility. It often happens on job sites. Stones may break loose unexpectedly and a worker who is not careful is struck and injured.

The same is true when you're chopping wood. It may be useful labor, but if the axe gets deflected, it can do damage to your foot. Or wood splinters might fly up into your eyes. None of this happens necessarily or every time, but every time you quarry stone or chop wood, an accident could happen. It is an ever present possibility.

This simple observation conceals a number of important thoughts. First, it reminds us that there are dangers that lurk in every nook and cranny of human life, dangers great and small. On the large scale there are natural disasters, wars, revolutions, death and all kinds of diseases. But things can also be peaceful and orderly. One sunny morning you can be busy with a group of people building a stone wall and chopping wood, and suddenly the unexpected happens. Someone gets badly injured.

This is a strange notion, isn't it – that we live under constant threat? Our lives are in constant danger. Life itself is dangerous. This thought seems to undermine the whole of reality. Wherever we go, the road is mined with explosives that may go off at any moment. If we cling to the idea that reality is creation, that it was made by God, and that God the Creator is holy and good, then this is a very strange thought.

The idea that reality is created does include the idea that it is contingent, that is to say, it could also not have existed. The fact that it exists is not a rational necessity. It depends entirely on the sovereign good will of the Creator. But we must not confuse the contingency of existence with the fact that it is threatened. Creation is good. And we can also say of created reality that it is good. Nevertheless, there is also this threat. Lurking in every nook and cranny of life are dangers.

These thoughts are hard to reconcile. And the Preacher doesn't try to do so. He simply describes what is. What he says is not lightly tripping, neatly rhyming poetry but rude, heavy-footed prose. Reality can be a challenge to faith.

This is, however, no argument against faith. On the contrary. If reality were not a challenge to faith, we wouldn't have to believe. We could simply observe the way things are. We need faith precisely because reality is a challenge. Otherwise, we are overcome by despair.

Despair is actually the easiest way to go. Despair clings to reason and confirms that reality is indeed irrational. Faith, on the other hand, is the hardest way to go. Faith brings difficulties; it does not always solve them. Neither does it avoid them, but it brings them to the fore. We must cling to this truth: faith poses difficulties. Only those who have faith encounter obstacles on the way.

The Preacher's simple observations conceal yet another thought. Although dangers lurk in every nook and cranny of life, they are by no means always realized. Time and time again, as we build walls and chop wood everything goes well. But then suddenly disaster strikes. An accident happens. Why now and not all those other times? Why this person and not someone else among a thousand others?

Is there anyone who can answer these questions? True, we do propose all sorts of answers. When disaster strikes, some feel that they are being punished for a sin they committed. Others come to the realization that it is time to call a halt to the rat race of their lives and to reflect on the meaning of things. Many others observe that suffering brings purification and simplification. Those who are deeply spiritual speak of a deep tie between suffering and love, a tie that is fully realized in the cross of Christ.

But these are all merely attempts at making sense. They do not give full, clear answers to our questions. What about those who were not stricken – didn't they need the same lesson? Then why this person and not that one? Doesn't it come down to pure arbitrariness? Are human beings merely the playthings of chance and fate?

Providence as the work and act of God seems to pose an even greater obscurity to faith than creation as the work and act of God. We must not be in too much of a hurry to solve it. But to allow this obscurity or darkness in our faith to destroy our faith in God's providence and thereby also in God would be foolish. That would be the easy way out of our difficulties. Then they are no longer genuine difficulties; then they are reduced to mere facts. Only in the light of faith in a God who is good and holy do they become difficulties.

But then we must also learn to bear them as such. The Christian life gives rise to all sorts of rationalisation that attempts to dissolve the darkness too quickly. We must be more patient, more longsuffering, more persevering in our faith. Genuine trust and perseverance means this – to endure, to stand up over against the darkness as darkness.

I suspect that there are more thoughts that went through the Preacher's mind in connection with his simple observation. For example, if this is the way things are, namely, that there are dangers everywhere that may or may not be realized, then we can never entirely dispose over things. We may project ourselves into life, but whatever we project is always radically altered by fate. This thought gives rise to others: in all situations we must be conscious of the dangers that lurk about, and therefore we must proceed with great care. This is one of the advantages of wisdom over foolishness. The fool rushes ahead recklessly, but wisdom proceeds with care.

But this thought in turn gives way to another. Wisdom, too, falls short. Reality puts it to shame. Building walls and chopping wood are useful undertakings. They can be done carefully, but in spite of all our care, accidents can and will happen. This is the stupidity and foolishness that is still part of reality and of human existence.

The conclusion is that all the toil of man under the sun is futile. Yet, the cross of Christ can train us to bear this terrible darkness in love and with a peace that passes all understanding. Nevertheless, we look forward with even greater longing to the last day when the creation will be wholly liberated from all this futility.

A special guest who likes life on the level

Lisa M. Petsche

My sister, Cecile, and her husband, Philip, who live in Florida, recently spent two weeks visiting in our area.

Usually they fly up for their annual visit, but this time they decided to drive so they could bring along Maggie, their big, beautiful golden retriever.

It was Maggie who transformed my canine-fearing kids into dog lovers several years ago, during our first-time visit to Florida. (Actually, they were starting to warm up to the idea of her prior to that. During a couple of solo visits I had made, Cecile had purchased and sent back with me some gifts for them "from Maggie." All three youngsters were quite impressed that their canine cousin cared so much about them – and knew just what they'd like, too.)

Once they got over her size (a vigorous wag of her tail could knock them over), they loved to be around "Mags," stroking her and giving her hugs. They would argue over whose turn it was to groom her, throw her toys in the pool, hold the leash during her walk or give her a treat.

The kids were intrigued by Maggie's human qualities and amazed at her good behaviour. An obedience school graduate, she knows to stay out of the kitchen when food is being prepared, to refrain from entering the pool until given permission to take a dip, and to remain outside until someone dries her off. And she loves riding in a golf cart.

Since we don't see her very often, the kids were ecstatic about her visit. The highlight was the evening Cecile, Philip and Maggie came over to our place for dinner, the night before they were to leave.

It was strange to see Maggie bound into our house and excitedly go from room to room, checking things out. We'd never had a dog in our home before. But it was more than that. Somehow Maggie seemed bigger than ever – almost larger than life. We quickly figured out why.

Her home in Florida is an open-concept style: big and bright, with high ceilings and wide doorways. In that environment, Maggie didn't seem to take up nearly as much space as in our traditional, closed-concept home with modest-sized rooms. (The poor creature could barely turn around in our son's compact bedroom – formerly the nursery – and when she finally laid down on the kitchen floor, everyone had to take a giant step over her.)

Even stranger, though, was when we descended to the basement family room after dinner and Maggie refused to follow. She went as far as the top of the steps, then settled there, seemingly oblivious to the kids' pleas for her to come down and join them.

My sister quickly explained Maggie's unusual behavior. She wasn't being anti-social – she just wasn't accustomed to doing stairs. Not only is their home in Florida a basement-less bungalow, but so are the homes of all their neighbours, friends and relatives down there.

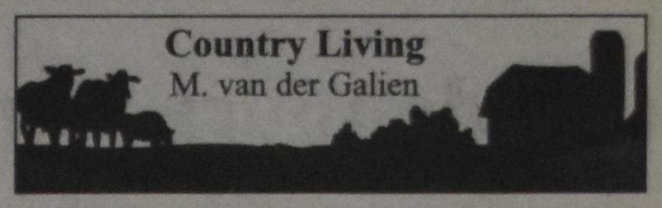
At 70 years old (in human life terms) and with an arthritic hip, Maggie was not about to change her lifestyle – at least not when faced with a whole storey's worth of stairs. Three or four might have been different. (She had to do stairs at my parents' two-storey house, where she was staying, but they have landings between each level.) Our basement staircase must have seemed formidable to her, being relatively narrow and steep, with 11 steps. Or maybe she'd just had enough of stairs after two weeks of negotiating them almost everywhere she went.

And so the kids came back up and took Maggie for a walk around the neighbourhood instead. Afterwards they enthusiastically fed her treats. (Being the only dog in our extended family, Maggie was showered during her stay with such doggy delicacies as Pup-Peroni and Snausages in a Blanket.)

All too soon we had to say goodbye, as Cecile and Philip were planning to head out on the road early the next morning. The kids were sad about parting with Maggie and thought she looked mournful, too. Still, I'll bet she's happy to be home now, living life on the level once more.

Lisa M. Petsche is a mother of three and a freelance writer specializing in family life.

Grazier farmers don't like operating machinery



You are probably not familiar with the term "grazier farmers". Grazier farmers don't like operating machinery. They believe the best and most powerful tool for turning grass into profit is their knowledge of grass, livestock, and grazing systems.

To find out more about the "graziers", I paid the $30 registration fee and was booked in to the day-long Profitable Pastures conference held in Cobden, Ont. Oh, what a writer doesn't do for a story!

Dr. Ben Bartlett of Michigan State University provided farmers with a wealth of information geared to efficient pasture management and increased profitability. Dr. Bartlett also runs a farm operation with 400 sheep and 200 grazing cattle.

Soon after the meeting started my suspicions were confirmed that graziers don't like operating machinery. Dr. Bartlett, with a wave of his hand, said it doesn't matter that his fields are a little rough – he hates plowing and when he plows a field, it isn't plowed in neat, even furrows.

One of the other grazier speakers, John Steele, runs 1,000 ewes on his farm near Peterborough. He said he sowed 15 acres of turnips at two and a half pounds per acre and mixed the seed with fertilizer – that's the only way to sow that small amount of seed using a drill seeder. Sheep graze on the turnips during the fall season. He said he ran out of seed twice and finished seeding just after dark. I shook my head in amazement when he said the next morning he checked the drill to find he had put the seed in the wrong box and wasted a lot of seed.

Graziers don't invest in expensive machines – simple and cheap will do. One grazier told me they hate operating machines. They let the animals graze the fields. They're big on electric fences. Cattle are moved all the time in and out of little electric fenced paddocks.

Some people regard graziers as a bit of a cult. Graziers like to walk pasture fields as a group. At a pasture walk, they work as a group, sharing their observations and learning from the different perspectives that each person in the group brings.

By sharing their individual observations and experiences, the members of a pasture walk will take away ideas that will help them increase the productivity of their pasture.

Now back to Dr. Bartlett. He said livestock graze for a set time period each day. Cows will graze for about 8 ½ hours each day and chew at 55 - 60 bites per minute. The influence that farmers can have on grazing is how large the cows mouth size is. Grass, he said, that is 10 - 25 cm high is ideal for quality and to provide the most quantity into the mouth for each bite.

Grass, he said, starts its growth or regrowth after being grazed with slow growth as it utilizes its root reserves. The growth rate increases as the leaves enlarge and growth now comes from photosynthesis. Then growth slows when the plant matures and goes into a reproduction mode.

Dr. Bartlett said farmers have grass that wants to reproduce and livestock that want to eat that grass and the challenge is now to put the two together to meet not only their needs but also your goal. The trick is to control the animal plant interaction using a fence. To prevent over-harvesting, re-biting before a plant has time to replenish its root reserves, you want to limit time in any one pasture/paddock to no more than three days. This means, he said, that in the spring with a quick regrowth you need a minimum of eight paddocks and as the growth rate slows, you need even more paddocks.

Since the pasture growth rates slow over the summer, this means you either have to add more paddocks or decrease the number of animals grazing. Dr. Bartlett said this may sound challenging. Most often this can be accomplished by adding hay fields to the pasture rotations as the summer progresses.

My beef cows and calves also graze on good grass. From mid-May to mid-November they are in a 45-acre pasture field. But I have no (make work) electric fences to move around. That allows me to go away on little vacations – for a few days at a time. In October we went on a 5-day bus tour to the Gaspe Peninsula, St. Anne de Beaupre (R.C. Church), Quebec City and to Grosse Ile.

It was a wonderful sightseeing vacation.

Maynard van der Galien operates The Old Town Hall Restaurant and Tea Room in downtown Renfrew, Ont. When he's away or busy on the farm, (kitchen staff) Susan and Janice's mom comes in to help.

Advent

Advent Devotions: 1st Week of Advent

These meditations were written to go with the lectionary, a list of Scripture readings that many pastors and churches follow, and which takes you through the entire Bible. The lectionary always combines three passages: from the Old Testament, the New Testament and the Psalms. These short devotions were written by ***Marian van Til.***

Sun., Dec. 3 Isaiah 1:1-9; 2 Peter 3:1-10; Matt. 25:1-13; Psalms 24 and 110

It's the first Sunday of Advent once more, and we begin to celebrate the New Year in the church calendar by looking joyously toward Christmas. Or do we? What's with these readings? First, God through Isaiah describes the sorry state his people are in because they've rebelled against him. Then Peter describes "the Day of the Lord," Judgment Day, and the scoffers who wonder, "Where is the coming God promised?" And Matthew recounts Jesus's parable of the wise and foolish virgins, where the theme is judgment once again – making ready for Christ's return and the sad consequences of failing to do so. The two psalms aren't quite as bleak. Psalm 24 is a processional celebrating the Lord's entrance into Zion; it has been understood throughout church history to also refer to Christ's ascension. Psalm 110 celebrates the coronation of a Davidic king. It is frequently quoted in the New Testament, especially by Jesus himself, pointing to himself as the ultimate King in David's line. Yet it, too, speaks of judgment for the nations who reject him.

Why begin Advent by reminding ourselves of Christ's *second* coming and the peril of Judgment? The answer lies in why Christ came into our world in the first place: to save us from that peril, to put us right with God. Much as we'd prefer to immerse ourselves in the profound *joy* of God taking on our very flesh and blood, we know we can't truly celebrate the Babe in the manger unless we keep in mind the slaughtered Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. That's why for centuries (until recently) Advent has been observed as a penitential season not unlike Lent. That doesn't mean we have to mute our joy. It merely asks us to come full circle, to keep in mind Christ's finished work, and to long for the day of his (re-)appearing!

O come, O Key of David, come and open wide our heavenly home.
Make safe for us the heavenward road and bar the way to death's abode.

Mon., Dec. 4 Isaiah 1:10-20; 1 Thess. 1:1-10; Luke 20:1-8; Psalms 122 and 67

All of today's lessons speak, in one way or another, of repentance – individually, as the church (believers everywhere), and as nations. God wants heart-felt service, and when we give it he promises absolute forgiveness, and then great blessing.

Part of the Isaiah passage says, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool." I always associate those words with Communion because they have long been part of the Communion liturgy in the Christian Reformed Church. But these words have seared themselves into my memory for another reason, and I think of them when I feel like I'm really messing up: they give us that absolute assurance that whatever we've done (no matter how terrible) and whatever the nature of our estrangement from God (whether ongoing or a temporary funk), he will wash us clean – thoroughly, spotlessly clean – when we repent.

The metaphor God uses is startling. Sins red as crimson refers to a murderer's blood-dripping hands (see v. 15). Oh, we're not actual murderers, but we're not free of hatred, discord, and other brokenness. If you've ever seriously cut yourself and dripped blood on white clothing or onto a white towel, you know how difficult it is to remove every trace of those awful crimson stains. But God, in Christ, offers us the ultimate Stain Remover. We will be white as snow, clean as new wool. We'll look clean, smell clean, *be* clean in his sight, from the inside out. Thanks be to God!

Then cleansed be every life from sin: make straight the way for God within,
and let us all our hearts prepare for Christ to come and enter there.

Tues., Dec. 5 Isaiah 1:21-31; 1 Thess. 2:1-12; Luke 20:9-18; Psalms 146 and 85

Isaiah starkly portrays God's people's rejection of him: they've become a promiscuous whore, their silver is tarnished, their wine watered down; their rulers are rebels and hang around with thieves, they love bribes, they ignore orphans and widows. There is a cure, but it requires repentance and is painful – God will purge away their dross as with a refining fire. But the result is magnificent: "Afterward you will be called the City of Righteousness, the Faithful City" (v. 26).

Using another striking metaphor, Psalm 85 elaborates on the blessings resulting from God's cure for us: "Love and faithfulness meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other. Faithfulness springs forth from the earth and righteousness looks down from heaven" (v. 10-11). These expressions of God's love for his people (us too!) are vividly personified: love and faithfulness meet and embrace, righteousness and peace kiss. New growth springs from the earth itself to bless us with plenty, and blessings pour from heaven. Thanks be to God!

Love caused your incarnation; love brought you down to me;
your thirst for my salvation procured my liberty.
O love beyond all telling, that led you to embrace
in love, all love excelling, our lost and fallen race.

Wed., Dec. 6 Isaiah 2:1-4; 1 Thess. 2:13-20; Luke 20:19-26; Psalm 147:1-12 and Psalm 53

I was reminded of verses from both Psalm 147 and 53 last month while watching a PBS (public television) documentary. Astronomers and physicists attempted to explain black holes – areas in space where the gravity is so intense that it sucks everything into itself, even light. It used to be thought that black holes are anomalies. But it has been recently discovered that they are all over space, in every galaxy, including our Milky Way, and that they seem to have an important role in how the universe is put together.

The thought of the existence of thousands of galaxies, each made up of planets and stars – millions upon millions of heavenly bodies – leaves us silent in awe, the more so when we recognize them as the work of God. In fact, he not only created them but "determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name" (Ps. 147:4). Such a God, the psalm continues, is "great," "mighty in power," and "his understanding has no limit." Indeed! There are no words to truly describe it.

Sad to say, many of the very scientists who are in a position to regularly see these stupendous works of God are inexplicably blind to his very existence. Psalm 53 doesn't mince words about such people. It opens by stating emphatically, "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God." If there *were* no God we might as well pack it all in right now. Our lives and all else would be utterly meaningless. But we need not doubt. Even more amazing than God's naming of the stars is that that same God sustains everything he created on our one small earth and is concerned with *us*. He heals the brokenhearted and binds up our wounds. He *delights* in those who acknowledge him, who "hope in his unfailing love" (147:3, 11).

The ultimate expression of that unfailing love is Jesus, who as God in flesh-and-blood profoundly understands our broken hearts, wounded spirits, weak bodies, and addictions to temptation. Thanks be God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!

For he is our childhood's pattern; day by day like us he grew;
he was little, weak, and helpless; tears and smiles like us he knew;
and he feels for all our sadness, and he shares in all our gladness.

Thurs., Dec. 7 Isaiah 2:5-22; 1 Thess. 3:1-13; Luke 20:27-40; Psalm 18:1-20 and Psalm 126

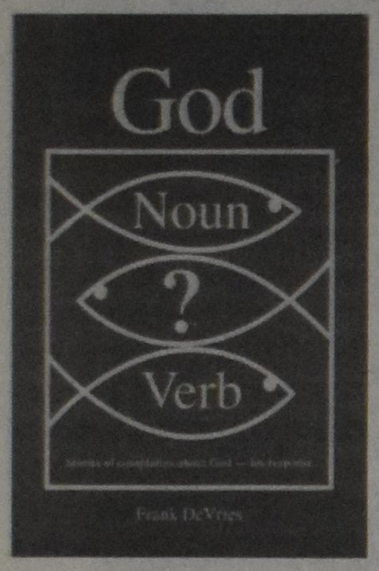
Once again we see the stark contrast between those who go their own way, allowing themselves to fall prey to all kinds of evil influences and idolatry (an idol is whatever is more important in our lives than God), and those who fear the Lord. This is "fear" that stands in awe of God's holiness, submits to his will, and follows his commandments. Only those who willfully ignore or blatantly oppose God have reason to feel terror in his presence.

We who love and serve God will not necessarily have easy lives, however. If we are faithful to him we may be persecuted (*will* be, Jesus says) – as Paul was, and as the Thessalonians were. But Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians still applies to us: Even in such bad times, "May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other, and for everyone else.... May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones" (3:13).

There it is again, an Advent allusion to Christ's second coming: "When Jesus comes with all his holy ones." *When*, not if. He'll be back! And what a day (and awesome sight) that will be! If Paul's statement isn't enough, Jesus himself assures us in his discussion with the resurrection-denying Sadducees that we will indeed rise. The argument he uses is uncanny: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – who had, even then, been dead for centuries – *are alive*. Jesus says, "In the account of the bush, even Moses showed that the dead rise, for he calls the Lord 'the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive" (Luke 20: 37-38). That is, and will be, a blessed assurance when persecution, illness, broken hearts or wounded spirits afflict us. And Psalm 126 gives

Reviews

God – Noun or Verb



Frank De Vries
Trafford Publishing, 112pp, $13.48

It is the year 2059 and Peter Retief, leader of the World Council of Churches, after undergoing a serious operation, reflects on the needs of the global church now connected via the worldwide web. With all the modern means of instant communication at his disposal, might God choose a new way to communicate with his people?

It is an age when even Dmitri Karamios, the seventy-eight year old Grand Prelate of the Russian Orthodox Church is wondering, "Is God asleep?" Turning on his computer, he stares at the screen in disbelief. On it he reads, "Dmitri, do you love me? – God."

Is it a trick? But he isn't the only one to be surprised by the question that has come unbidden onto his computer screen. All the representatives of the WCC in every part of the world have received the same message. After some hurried meetings, the WCC begins to serve as a direct intermediary between God and his people, and twelve people are invited to pose the deepest questions of their hearts to God. Will God answer?

In a fiction of 112 pages Frank De Vries develops what amounts to an interlocking series of short stories or character sketches to develop his theme. The title, *God – Noun or Verb* sounds like the title of a theological essay but it is not that. Nor is it a novel in the usual sense of the word, for it is rather thin in terms of plot. There are no car chases or bodies, but De Vries does succeed admirably in bringing to life twelve different character from very different cultures, each with his or her own deep wounds causing them to cry out to God, crying for an answer. Is it merely a clever trick, an elaborate act of ventriloquy?

Long-time readers of CC will be familiar with the work of Frank de Vries, who used to be a regular contributor. Besides teaching school, Frank has written poetry, hymns, children's songs and Sunday school materials.

De Vries has written an intriguing little book that raises hard questions. Consider it for someone on your Christmas list. The book may be ordered at http://www.trafford.com/ or by calling the toll-free number: 1-888-232-4444.

Getting Unstuck
Arlene Van Hove

Embracing the swamplands of the soul

...virtually all of us lack a deep sense of permission to lead our own lives.

Rather than ask, what does my tribe demand of me, what will win me collective approval, what will please my parents, (spouse or children), we ask," what do the gods intend through me?"...and the answers will vary with the stage of life, and from one person to another.

The necessary choices (of life) will never prove easy, but asking this question, and suffering it honestly, leads through the vicissitudes of life to larger places of meaning and purpose.

All quotes by James Hollis

Life refuses to stay in its place. One moment we are content and happy, the next moment we are tossed indignantly on the waves of change. Some of us experience the need for change as a quiet knock on the door. Others experience the need as clanging alarms bells that cause gut-wrenching anxiety.

This is what is happening to my friend. He is suffering emotionally and spiritually on a daily basis. His calmness is shattered and irritation and restlessness rule his day. Lately, he has only enough energy to "get the job done at home and at work." I wish I could help him. But I know I can only "be" there for him when he wants to chat. I also know he does not like being in this uncomfortable place. His mind is constantly busy with nagging life questions that tiptoe over the threshold of his seemingly well-ordered existence.

I am never happy to see people suffering. Yet, James Hollis in *Finding Meaning in the Second Half of Life* writes "the presence of suffering is already a manifestation of the psyche at work." And that is what is happening to my friend who feels and thinks deeply about the mysteries of life. Hollis also believes inner turmoil, especially in midlife, is a necessary part of challenging ourselves to forge a path in life that is finally our own. At the same time, our environment can be a deterrent to our need to grow.

As Christians we often experience tension between seeing ourselves as selfish or selfless because we are taught to sacrifice the self. Unfortunately, this teaching shows a lack of understanding of the emotional development of the human person. In our first half of life we develop in terms of the demands and influence of our external environment. What or how people think about us matters in that stage of life and so we behave according to the values that win approval, gain love, success and a sense of security and belonging. So we marry, go to college, join the army, produce children and careers and from time to time question why we are doing what we are doing.

As we approach midlife (or sometimes old age), Hollis writes, no amount of right intentions, right thinking, right behavior, right theology, or even right psychology can spare us encounters with confusion, disorientation, boredom, depression, and disappointment in ourselves and others. Hollis refers to these experiences as necessary "swamplands of the soul." And therein lies the difference between our struggles for self in search of wholeness versus self in terms of self-absorption.

Hollis believes much of our so-called New Age thinking has seeped into general public consciousness, because this populist philosophy offers seductive and ungrounded spiritual practices which seeks to finesse the question of suffering. They also provide gurus whose simplistic thinking convinces us love, financial success and happiness are just around the corner.

I agree with Hollis, who believes we could learn from Carl Jung, who would see my friend's suffering as a part of the will of the psyche towards individuation, a metaphor for our natural innate drive towards wholeness or becoming who we are meant to be. And paradoxically, surrendering to this process does not bring grandiosity, self-absorption or a free pass from suffering but a renewed sense of purposefulness and meaning – a view of the human person much more in line with how God created us since the beginning of time. At the same time, the challenge for my friend is not only to give himself permission to struggle with the big questions in life but also to enjoy the quiet unfolding of himself in this busy and noisy world.

Arlene Van Hove is a therapist and a member of the Fleetwood CRC. She can be reached at avanhove@shaw.ca

one more assurance: "Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy." Thanks be to God for the great things he has done for us and for filling us with joy! (126:3).

You come, O Lord, with gladness, in mercy and goodwill,
to bring an end to sadness and bid our fears be still.
In patient expectation we live for that great day
when a renewed creation your glory shall display.

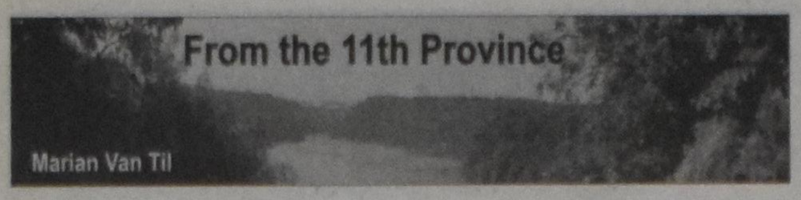
Fri., Dec. 8 Isaiah 3:1-4:1; 1 Thess. 4:1-12; Luke 20:41-21:4; Psalms 102 and 16

Psalm 102:19 reveals in a nutshell the purpose and need for Christ's incarnation: "The Lord looked down from his sanctuary on high, from heaven he viewed the earth, to hear the groans of the prisoners and release those condemned to death." We know the story but need to keep reminding ourselves: we deserve God's death sentence, yet in Christ he commutes our sentence. Just as he did not leave Christ in the grave, he will not abandon *us* to death and decay. Therefore, in joyful thanks we are urged – commanded, actually – to live holy lives that please him – "holy" as in set apart for his service. Our emphasis needs to be not only thanks but *joy*. Joy that the God of heaven and earth has become our Savior and our friend. Joy as we serve him now and as we will serve him forever. David puts it this way in Psalm 16: "You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand."

It's that "forever" part that's hard to fathom. Unlike some evangelicals, we don't usually concentrate much on the final indescribable reward of our service to God that will someday be freely lavished upon us by him "who is able to do immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine" (Eph. 3:20). Perhaps we even think it's childish or spiritually immature to focus on the heavenly laurels that will eventually come to us, rather like accepting a divine bribe ("You serve me," says God, "and I'll reward you, big time!"). But Scripture keeps describing those rewards over and over. Unashamedly. So let's relish the thought that Christ's coming has made possible a life of joyful thanks and intimate communion with God, now and, yes, forever!

Hark, the glad sound! The Savior comes, the Savior promised long!
Let every heart prepare a throne, and every voice a song.
He comes the prisoners to release, in Satan's bondage held;
the gates of brass before him burst, the iron fetters yield.
He comes the broken heart to bind, the wounded soul to cure;
and with the treasures of his grace to enrich the humbled poor.
Our glad hosannas, Prince of Peace, your welcome shall proclaim;
and heaven's eternal arches ring with your beloved name.

Reflections



'O blest communion, fellowship divine'

If you are Reformed, All Saints' Day on November 1 probably passed you by. Or rather, you passed by it, without a thought. And the more so All Souls Day (Nov. 2). That's not surprising. We are rightly uncomfortable with Roman Catholic feast days that are apparently based on a faulty notion of both sainthood and sanctification.

All Saints' Day, as its name says, honours all the saints, known and unknown, and grew out of a second century custom of remembering on the anniversaries of their deaths those who had been martyred for Christ's sake. Nothing wrong with that. But over time it expanded into something that would have chagrined those martyrs. The *Catholic Encyclopedia* says:

In the fourth century, neighbouring dioceses began to interchange feasts, to transfer relics, to divide them, and to join in a common feast; as is shown by the invitation of St. Basil of Caesarea (AD 397) to the bishops of the province of Pontus. Frequently, groups of martyrs suffered on the same day, which naturally led to a joint commemoration. In the persecution of Diocletian the number of martyrs became so great that a separate day could not be assigned to each. But the Church, feeling that every martyr should be venerated, appointed a common day for all.... We also find mention of a common day in a sermon of St. Ephrem the Syrian (373), and in the 74th homily of St. John Chrysostom (407). At first only martyrs and St. John the Baptist were honored by a special day. Other saints were added gradually, and increased in number when a regular process of canonization was established.... Gregory IV (827-844) extended the celebration on November 1 to the entire Church.

As All Saint's Day commemorates martyrs and canonized saints, All Souls Day commemorates the ordinary "faithful departed." Theologically it is based on the notion that when ordinary Christians die their souls are not perfectly clean of venial sins. Time in purgatory provides the needed cleansing, helped by the faithful on earth through "prayers, alms deeds, and especially by the sacrifice of the Mass."

Perhaps that's one kind of communion of the saints, but it's not the biblical picture. Yet that doesn't mean we need to steer clear of giving thanks for all the saints (biblical definition) who have gone before us (the church triumphant, as we used to call it), as well as regularly praying for our fellow saints on earth, near and far (the church militant).

For all the saints...

So I have a proposal. I suggest that we can "redeem" All Saints' Day when we do the following:

1. **Give heartfelt thanks to God for all our fellow saints, in heaven and on earth**: for that "great cloud of witnesses" who already stand before his throne; and for all who still faithfully serve him here and now (wherever they live on earth), who have not bowed the knee to modern Baals.

2. **Urgently intercede for our fellow saints who are being persecuted**, even now, in North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Somalia, Vietnam, China and numerous other places. (Many of these saints finally give their lives as the apostles did through beatings, unspeakable torture, stonings, beheadings and even crucifixion). Become aware of the needs of the persecuted church.

3. **Pray on our own behalf for the strength and courage** not to deny our Lord when hardship comes, and to accept, endure and, yes, to rejoice in the suffering that comes to *us* because we confess him as the one Lord of heaven and earth (see 1 Peter 4:12-19).

A handful of people among that great cloud of witnesses are mentioned in Hebrews 11 (the presence of some in the list always seems surprising): Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses' parents, Moses himself, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets. Why should we offer thanks for these long-dead saints? Because their faith inspires us to "throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles" us and to "run with perseverance the race marked out for us" (Heb. 12:1). In short, they are excellent and necessary examples for us. They are *living* saints, part of that cloud of witnesses.

'A brief candle, both ends burning'

Try to imagine that the physical earth we live on, our physical selves and the physical matter in the universe were all that exists. Imagine that apart from your bone and blood and sinew you are nothing. Imagine there were no immaterial world, no world of the spirit. No God. Such a world would be a thin and tiny place even if it extended across countless galaxies. The grass withers, the flower fades. We stop breathing. End of story.

Sure, we might have memories of dead family members and friends; or thoughts of historical figures who had lived and died before us. But that's all we'd have. And then we'd join them. But not exactly *join* them, as there would be no communion possible."Join them" in the sense of returning to the dust from which we're all made.

'There breaks a yet more glorious day'

Now consider the world the way God made it and the way we Christians experience it. It is a world both physical and immaterial, of body and spirit, visible and invisible, of myriad angels and devils in which we still suffer under the heel-bruising of Satan even while we know that the Saviour who wore our flesh and spilled his blood has already crushed the head of that Prince of Darkness. It is a world in which Christ, in his resurrected, glorified but *still human* body now sits at the right hand of God. It is a world full of millions of the righteous on earth and in heaven who the Spirit binds together by cords that transcend death and the physical and immaterial worlds. That is communion of the saints.

When the Sadducees argued with Jesus, adamant that there will be no resurrection (Luke 20:27 ff.), Jesus counters with an unexpected argument (doesn't he always?). He asserts, "Even Moses showed that the dead rise." The Sadducees' first reaction was likely, "When did Moses say *that*? That's not in the Pentateuch!"

"He calls the LORD 'the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," Jesus goes on (20:37). Their God, present tense! That's the crux of the matter. God *is* Abraham's, Isaac's, Jacob's God, and Moses's God, though they had all been dead for centuries when Jesus and his interrogators were on earth. Notice that Jesus uses the word "resurrection" to mean both the final resurrection and life with God after physical death. (So our creeds are careful to say, referring to the consummation of all things, that we believe the resurrection *of the body,* and the life everlasting. Note that the creeds say we "believe the resurrection," etc., not "believe *in*...." We believe *in* God alone.)

So God *is* the God of Adam, David, the Prophets and Apostles. He *is* the God of Joan of Arc, of Luther and Calvin, of Blaise Pascal, of Bach, Handel, Mozart and Mendelssohn. God *is*, not *was*, the God of my grandparents; and God *is* the God of my parents, each of whom died early by our standards but at the right time on God's clock.

"God is not the God of the dead, but of the living, *for to him all are alive.*" That argument-ending statement by Jesus is perhaps the clearest in all Scripture in assuring us that we are forever and always in God's hands, whether in the body or in the spirit, in this life or the next.

'I believe the communion of saints'

This truth has delightful, mind-boggling implications for how we view the communion of the saints. We tend to consider that concept as consisting of a relationship only with saints still alive here-and-now. But it's deeper and broader. Of course I'm not suggesting that we start trying to communicate with the physically dead among the saints, nor that we address them in prayer.

I am asserting that we do well to keep the whole people of God, on earth and in heaven, within our working worldview, so to speak. And though the angels aren't saints, don't forget them either – ministering spirits that they are, who guard and tend us saints at God's command (Ps. 91:11; Matt. 4:11), and who will be sent out by Christ himself at his return (with a loud trumpet call) to "gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other," (Matt. 24:31). Talk about communion of the saints!

Developing a continual awareness of the saints on earth and in heaven – *all* the living servants of God – seems to thin the veil between heaven and earth. God's world becomes immense, time- and space-transcending, awe-filling not just in physical size but in spiritual depth and breadth. Pondering the combined church in heaven and on earth should elicit our exultation over the wondrous God who has "knit together [his] elect in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of [his] Son Christ our Lord," as the *Book of Common Prayer* puts it. That communion is precisely what motivates us to pray for those being persecuted for Christ's sake; it is what creates instant but profound kinship between us and people in other cultures and languages that we have never even met.

The world finds its bonds among people in the fact that we're all human. But in this fallen world, apart from the Spirit of Christ the cords of that "common humanity" easily distort or break. Communion of the saints is a bond that is eternal. It is, really, a taste here and now of heaven's "blest communion, fellowship divine" (see the hymn "For All the Saints"). And it will be the basis of our relationships on the new earth, when God himself will dwell among us, when the glory of God himself will be the light of the New Jerusalem and the Lamb will be its lamp.

Marian Van Til worked for Christian Courier *from 1984-2000, and preceded Harry der Nederlanden as its editor. She now lives in Youngstown, NY; she may be contacted via e-mail at <mvantil@adelphia.net>.*

The new
Content Pastorale Mondri Organ
Now available for your listening pleasure!
Introductory price: **$19,995. --**
LIMITED TIME OFFER
All of our organs for both church and home can be viewed at **www.organs.ca**
Phone: 905-631-1929
Toll free: **1-800-376-7199**

EUROPEAN ORGAN CENTRE
by the music group inc.
QUALITY PIPE AND DIGITAL ORGANS

2-5205 Harvestor Road
Burlington, Ontario L7L 6B5

Classifieds

Christmas is coming and so is our Christmas issue.
If you want to be included with a special advertisement or greeting, please contact Ineke at **905-682-8311** or email: **ads@christiancourier.ca**
subject: Christmas Issue Dec. 18

A **charitable** gift **annuity** offers:

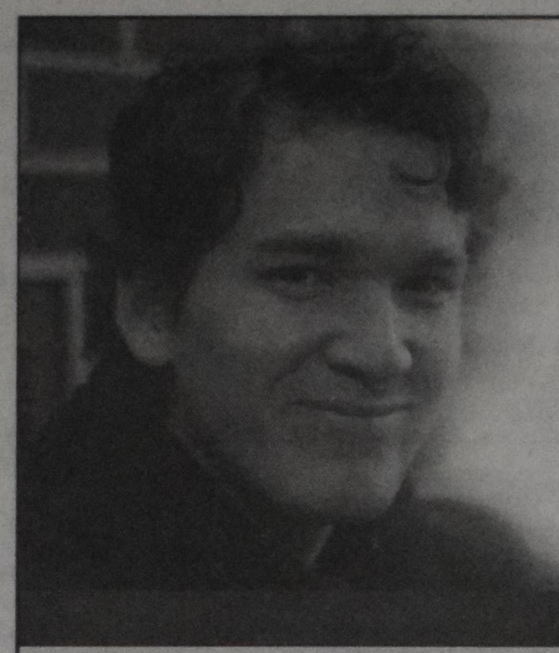
REDEEMER University College

- the peace of mind of a guaranteed lifetime income, largely tax free
- the satisfaction of knowing that you will be providing a future gift for Redeemer University College

Blended rate of 6 - 10% (capital returned & interest) for those over 65.
Please contact us for your own confidential, no-obligation quote.
Information available on other gift-planning options as well.

CHRISTIAN Stewardship SERVICES

Redeemer University College 777 Garner Road East, Ancaster, Ontario L9K 1J4
905-648-2139 ext. 4205 (Ben) stewardship@redeemer.on.ca



REDEEMER University College

ANNUAL BUSINESS COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 23

When you support a student, you build a future leader!

Leading our community into the future…

Redeemer University College is committed to helping students discover their unique skills and realize their potential for contributing to the future of our community.

Join us at our Annual Business Community Open House on Thursday November 23, 2006 from 4:30 to 6:30pm. Come and discover why businesses are partnering with Redeemer to help equip students for productive lives of leadership and service.

"Redeemer University is a whole lot more than just a university. Redeemer is about gaining knowledge as well as learning about oneself..." Craig Vanderveen, Student Senate President

Our graduates … Principled, Passionate and Prepared

REDEEMER UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
777 Garner Road East, Ancaster, ON L9K 1J4 Tel: 905.648.2131
Toll Free: 1.877.779.0913 Fax: 905.648.2134 www.redeemer.ca

Connecting Donors, Charities, & Ministries

Interested in a **GUARANTEED** Income?
Want to **SAVE** Tax?
Interested in leaving a **LEGACY**?

CSS has been offering Charitable Gift Annuities (CGA) for over 25 years.
If you are over the age of 65 then a CGA may be for you.

Please contact our office for a confidential, no-obligation quote.
1-800-267-8890; admin@csservices.ca

CHRISTIAN Stewardship SERVICES

Suite 214A– 500 Alden Road
Markham, ON L3R 5H5
www.csservices.ca

Know someone who may enjoy reading the *Christian Courier*?
Let us know their name and address and we will send the next four issues to them at no cost. Call Rose at **1-800-969-4838** or email: **rose@christiancourier.ca**

Low interest rates getting you down?

If you're over 65, have you considered a **charitable gift annuity**?

- Wonderful income - as high as 10%
- Largely tax exempt
- An charitable receipt for at least 20% of the annuity amount.
- This lasts as long as you live
- Worry free
- Benefits the charities of your choice

Never heard of a gift annuity? Call for a no-obligation quotation or have a child or grandchildren call on your behalf.

LinkCharity Canada Inc

45 Harriet St. Toronto M4L 2G1
Ph: 1-800-387-8146 Fax: 416-465-6367
www.linkcharity.ca Email: info@linkcharity.ca

BUSINESS and SERVICE DIRECTORY

CALVIN
MINDS IN THE MAKING

Calvin College
Grand Rapids, Michigan
1-800-688-0122
www.calvin.edu

CANADIAN CHRISTIAN BUSINESS FEDERATION

970 Bonnieview Ave
Burlington,
ON L7T 1T5

Ph: 905-522-8602
Fax 905-524-1203
J Hans Vander Stoep Executive Director
jvstoep@ccbf.org
CCBF activities listed on our Web-site
www.ccbf.org

Ontario Plywood Specialties (1987) ltd

- PLYWOOD
- PANELLING
- TRIM
- MOULDINGS
- DOORS

257 Cent. Pkwy N Hamilton, ON L8E 2X3
John Ouwehand • Syd Grypstra
Ph: 905-561-3576 Fax: 905-561-3581

DUTCH TOKO
European Imports

118 Wyndham St. N. Guelph
519-822-4690
Mountain Plaza Mall, Hamilton
905-383-2981

Hulse & English
Funeral Home
75 Church St. St. Catharines
905-684-6346 - 24 Hours
IAN H. RUSSELL
DAVID WALPOLE - Managing Director
Serving the community for 151 years

INSURANCE SOLUTIONS

BARRY VAN ZOEREN, C.A.I.B.

ALBERT VAN REEWYK INSURANCE BROKERS LTD

409 Dundas St. W.
Belleville, ON K8P 1B6
Ph: 613-968-4576
Fax: 613-968-2356

499 Dundas St. W.
Trenton, ON K5V 6C4
Ph: 613-965-1993
Fax:613-965-1252

Certified Management Accountant
GARY VAN EYK, CMA

GVE
50 Lakeport Rd.
Ste 201
St. Catharines
ON L2N 4P7

Email: garyvaneyk@bellnet.ca
Bus: 905-646-7331 Fx: 905-646-0951

ADA REALTY LTD.

Sid Vandermeulen

Suite 404, 2011-137 Ave.
Edmonton AB T5A 4W2
Tel: 780-473-8149

RAMAKER'S IMPORTS INC.

We specialize in
DUTCH FOOD / CHEESE /
CHOCOLATE / TEXTILES & GIFTS

579 Ontario St.
St. Catharines
Ontario L2N 4N8

Fax: 905-934-3344
Tel: 905-934-6454

E-mail: linde_ramaker@cogeco.ca

RESERVED FOR YOUR BUSINESS!!
Only $25.00. Run your ad monthly or perhaps every issue.
Check out our website: www.christiancourier.ca for issue dates and deadlines.
Call us at 905-682-8311 or email: ads@christiancourier.ca

Classifieds

Classifieds

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION
Christian Courier is published on alternate Mondays. Copy deadline for each issue is 9 a.m. Tuesday, 13 days prior to publication date.
RATE: (GST added to rates listed)
All personal and family announcements: $6.00 per square inch.
rose@christiancourier.ca
Display advertising re. businesses and organizations: $8.00 per square inch.
email: **ads@christiancourier.ca**
PHOTOS: There is a processing fee of $25 for the inclusion of a photograph with a personal or family announcement. Photo space is not charged per square inch but we reserve the right to determine published photo size. Please note that we cannot use a faxed photo. We need either an original photo (which we will return) or a downloadable internet image.
PERSONAL ADS: *Christian Courier* would be pleased to handle your personal ad in an efficient and discreet manner. The cost to set up a personal file under a unique file number is $25. Ads requesting correspondence with this file are run at $8 P.I. per insertion. All correspondence is immediately forwarded unopened.
NEWLYWEDS & NEW PARENTS: We offer a $25 one-year subscription to couples whose wedding is announced in *Christian Courier* and to parents who announce a child's birth in our paper. If you want to take advantage of this offer, please let us know when placing your ad.
SUBMITTING YOUR AD
Mail: Christian Courier
1 Hiscott St
St. Catharines ON L2R 1C7
fax: 905-682-8313 e-mail: see above
OTHER INFORMATION: *Christian Courier* reserves the right to print classifieds using our usual format and editing style and is not responsible for any errors due to hand-written or phoned-in advertisements.

Ministry Anniversary

Pastor SID AND JANICE COOPER
plan to celebrate their
50th Anniversary in the Gospel Ministry of the CRC
at First CRC, Sarnia, Ont., **Nov. 26**, at the **10 a.m.** service.
Pastor Sid was ordained here, the Coopers celebrated their 25th anniversary in the ministry here and now their 50th.

Let God be praised!

Home address: #214-1285 Sandy Lane, Sarnia ON N7V 4J7
e-mail; sjcooper@rivernet.net

Anniversaries

55TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

1951 November 28 2006
The Netherlands Wallaceburg, Ont. Can.

JOHN AND RIEK BOSMAN

We always thank God, the Father of our LORD Jesus Christ, when we pray for you. Colossians 1:3

May God's love and faithfulness continue to embrace your lives.

Love from all of your children,
Rita & Eno, Ed & Tilda, John & Edna, Jack & Jane, Ken & Brenda, Arnold & Angela, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

Mailing address: 143 Andrew Ave, Wallaceburg ON N8A 5J3

1956 November 24 2006

We are happy to announce the **50th Anniversary** of

SIDNEY AND CLARA KOOISTRA (nee **Koopmans**)

We pray that God will continue to bless you both!

Congratulations mom and dad with love from your children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren!

Henry & Lauretta Kooistra – Ryan, Ashley and Jason
Grace & Harry Weening – Cheryl, Jennifer, Devin, and Harris
Ed & Cindy Kooistra – Amanda & Jim (Taryn), Allison & Ron (Emmett), Joel, & Mitchell
Teresa Kooistra – Jesse
Marilyn & Larry Simpson – Jared, Elisha, Meghan, Jason, and Colleen
Richard & Emily Kooistra – Caitlyn, Alex, and Randy

To celebrate we are having an **Open House** from 3:00 to 5:30 p.m.
at Springdale Christian Reformed Church
1466 Sideroad 5, Bradford, Ont.
Best wishes only please.

Correspondence: 146 Victoria Street East, Alliston ON L9R 1K6

Obituaries

Woerden, Neth. St. Petersburg, Fl.

Suddenly the LORD took unto himself
our dear sister in-law and aunt

ANN MARIE RUMPH (nee **Van Helden**)

at the age of 72.

We will always remember
her cheerful disposition.
May her husband Arnold, her children
and grandchildren be comforted with the
promises of the LORD
as we read e.g. in Psalm 103:17

Henry & Lammie Rumph *Grimsby, ON*
Hilbert & Diny Rumph *Drayton, ON*
Jake & Teresa Rumph *Ancaster, ON*
Hilda & John Steenbergen *Drayton, ON*
Alice & Ralph Van Dyke *Kitchener, ON*
Albert & Ann Rumph *Collingwood, ON*
and families

Correspondence address:
Rev. Arnold Rumph
Boca Bay, Westshore Village
3210-F 39th St S
St. Petersburg FL 33711

The LORD is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?
The LORD is the stronghold of my life, of whom shall I be afraid? Psalm 27:1

On Sunday morning, October 22, 2006,
the LORD took to himself

HENDRIK JAN VEURINK

in his 81st year.
Beloved husband of 55 years to Geziena (nee Breukelman)
Loving father to children:
Minnie & Herb Grootenboer, *Brantford*
Hank & Alice Veurink, *Waterford*
Fritz & Alice-Marie Veurink, *Thunder Bay*
John & Arlene Veurink, *Thunder Bay*
Hans & Diane Veurink, *Jarvis*
Ben & Ruth Veurink, *Medicine Hat*
Gerry & Nancy Veurink, *Thunder Bay*
Jeannette & Henry Tempelman, *Thunder Bay*
Melinda & Dave Haverman, *Thunder Bay*
Loving Opa to 37 grandchildren and 5 great-grandchildren.

Funeral Services were held on October 27, 2006 at 2 p.m. at the United Reformed Church in Thunder Bay.

Mailing address: Geziena Veurink
RR3 McClusky Rd, Thunder Bay ON P7C4V2

Born Died
Almelo, The Netherlands SHALOM Edmonton, Alberta
March 3, 1917 † October 28, 2006

REV. NICOLAAS BASTIAAN KNOPPERS SR. (emeritus)

Nick was called home to his Eternal Rest on the morning of October 28, 2006. He is survived by his loving wife and partner, Barthie; his children, Jake & Jocelyne *(Montreal, QC)*, Annelies *(the Netherlands)*, Bastian & Joan *(Chicago, IL)*, Bartha & Daniel *(Montreal, QC)*, Nick & Joanne *(Edmonton, AB)*, and Gary & Laura *(State College, PA)*, and was blessed with nine grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren. He is also survived by a sister-in-law and a brother-in-law, fourteen nieces and nephews and numerous friends.

He served in the Dutch Resistance movement, as a Dutch Air force Chaplain, Civil Air Defence Chaplain in the United States, and in various Classis and Synod gatherings of the Christian Reformed Church. He ably served as minister and pastor to three congregations in the Netherlands, four congregations in Canada, and one mission field in the United States. Nicholas was also instrumental in assisting in laying the foundations for The King's University College.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Knoppers-Boon Scholarship Fund at The King's University College, 9125-50 St, Edmonton AB Canada T6B 2H3
Website address - www.kingsu.ca

Correspondence: #232 - 12 Brower Drive, Sherwood Park AB T8H 1V3

Personals

Lonely widower, young, mid-60's, looking for a female companion.
Reply to: File #2757
c/o Christian Courier
1 Hiscott St,
St. Catharines ON L2R 1C7

Vacation

HOLIDAY IN HOLLAND
Self-contained cottage in
Friesland.
Sleeps four/five persons.
Contact sj.kalma@planet.nl

Experience the ultimate
vacation destination in the
Great Smoky Mountains
of East Tennessee

with a visit to Abide With Me. Abide With Me is a private and secluded luxury log cabin located in the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains, yet close to all the action in Gatlinburg and Pigeon Forge.
For information call
1-519-351-6808
or visit
www.abidewithme.net/cc.html.
Special rates for *Christian Courier* readers.

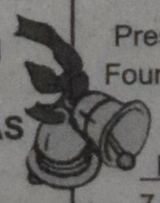
For Rent

1 BEDROOM new appartment
(spacious walk out basement)
$650 a month, Beamsville, quiet subdivision, near QEW. Utilities, c/a and use of washer & dryer included.
Available December 1.
905-563-6995 / 905-630-6995

For Sale

40 burgandy coloured **CHOIR ROBES**; various sizes; excellent condition. Best offer. Please contact Audrey Grootenboer
807-935-2778 / 807-939-1209(wk)
or e-mail: cgrooten@tbaytel.net

LIBERATION CHOIR IN CONCERT
3rd ANNUAL CHRISTMAS SINGALONG



Friday, **December 22** @ 8 p.m.
Central Presbyterian Church,
165 Charlton Ave W
Hamilton, Ontario
Director and Organist:
Willem Van Suijdam
Free-will offering for Worldwide Christian Schools.
Contact: WCS at **905 333 4430**

Events

Dutch Language
Christmas Carol Service
Sunday December 10th,
7:30 p.m.
at Emmanuel Reformed Church
in Woodstock
170 Clarke Street North
Babysitting Provided
Refreshments served following the service.
We invite you all to come!

ANNUAL DUTCH
CHRISTMAS HYMN SING

Presented by Zingend Geloven Foundation -The Dutch Christian Radio Broadcast

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER, 17
7.30 p.m. at "Heritage Hall"
Holland Christian Homes
7900 McLaughlin Road S.
Brampton
With participation of
The Liberation Choir under the direction of Willem Van Suijdam;
Lenny Dykstra, Song Leader;
Rev. P. Van Egmond, meditation.

Job Opportunity

BETHEL CRC is looking for a
full time Youth Director (YD)

to oversee it's youth and young adult program. The ideal candidate must have strong administrative, interpersonal, and leadership skills. We are looking to develop a relational youth ministry that is overseen by the Youth Ministry Committee. This position reports to church council.
Check out our website for a full job description at
www.bethelcrc.com.
Interested applicants are asked to mail their resume to
Bethel CRC
345 Elizabeth St E, Listowel ON N4W 2P7
or email **office@bethelcrc.com**

Great gift for your frisian friends or relatives!!

Some of our readers asked if there was a video or DVD of the play shown in the a few select areas in Ontario. I recieved a few DVDs from the Netherlands and they are available for our readers at a cost of $30 which includes mailing.

Beppe Tryntsje shows what it means to grow old: the confrontation with contemporary society, the ailments of old age and the mind constantly sliding back to the past. Family trees and old pictures are passing by. The past comes to life again.

Call us at **1-800-969-4838** for a DVD
or email: **ads@christiancourier.ca**

Job Opportunities

WOODLAND CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL
is inviting applications for the position of

teaching Principal

effective August 1, 2007.

Woodland Christian High School is an interdenominational community of 200 students and 16 teachers, located in newly upgraded facilities in a beautiful rural setting just east of Kitchener, Ontario, Canada. It is currently in its 30th year of operation. The principal is part of a dynamic administrative team within a very supportive and growing school community.

If you would like to learn more about Woodland Christian High School, you are invited to visit Woodland's website at www.woodland.on.ca.

Applicants should include:

- a 'Statement of Faith' which describes their walk with the Lord and the educational implications of that relationship.
- a one to three page attachment demonstrating how their skills, experience and values relate to their *Christian character, curriculum development and delivery, educational philosophy and vision, leadership and management skills, planning and evaluation* and *community relations.*
- three references

Applications and inquiries may be directed to:

The Search Committee, Woodland Christian High School
1058 Spitzig Road, Breslau, ON, N0B 1M0
or search@woodland.on.ca

Applications will be received until November 30, 2006.

Our Mission : *Equipping Students for lives of Christian Service*

SASKATOON CHRISTIAN SCHOOL
invites applications for the position of

Principal

SCS is a K – 12 interdenominational parent-governed Christian School which has:

- Associate school status – salaries commensurate with the Saskatoon Public School Board
- CSI affiliation
- an enrolment of approximately 275 students
- a beautiful new facility (with expansion opportunities) situated on 37 acres

Suitable applicants will have:

- a commitment to the Bible as the source and foundation of all truth
- a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord
- a dedication to nurturing and maintaining a positive relationship between the Saskatoon Society for Christian Education (SSCE) and the Saskatoon Public School Board
- see school website (http://www.saskatoonchristianschool.ca) for a more complete description

Duties to commence August, 2007.

Interested persons should direct inquiries to:

Klaas de Rooy, SSCE Board Chairman
Email: klaasderooy@shaw.ca
Fax: (306) 249 – 3082 Office phone: (306) 249 - 3035
Cell phone: (306) 221 - 7900
433 Birch Crescent
Saskatoon, SK. S7N 2K2

INSTITUTE FOR CHRISTIAN STUDIES, Toronto.

Two tenure-track positions,
one to begin July 2007, the other July 2008.
Ranks open. Ph.D. prior to appointment. Four graduate courses per year plus supervisions.

AOS: either social and political theory or philosophy of the arts and culture.
AOC: one or more of ancient Western, modern, contemporary French, feminist, Reformational philosophy.

ICS is an independent graduate school for interdisciplinary philosophy in the Reformed tradition. Women, minority candidates, and all other qualified candidates are encouraged to apply; Canadian citizens and Permanent Residents will be given priority. Further details at *www.icscanada.edu*

Send letter, CV, names of 3 references, writing sample, and evidence of teaching ability to

President, Institute for Christian Studies
229 College Street
Toronto Ontario M5T 1R4 Canada

Deadline: January 8, 2007.

DIRECTOR OF CURRICULUM PUBLICATIONS

OACS

The Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools (OACS), Ontario's oldest and largest independent school organization representing 82 non-denominational Christian schools, is seeking to appoint a suitable candidate for its senior management team.

The Director of Curriculum Publications will be responsible for maintaining the curriculum development program of the OACS and creating new programs to enhance the growing market for Christian education publications.

The preferred candidate will have a strong commitment to the reformed traditions of cultural engagement, have extensive administrative experience in OACS and/or Christian Schools Canada schools, be conversant with current educational theories of instruction and be prepared for the challenge of technological innovation.

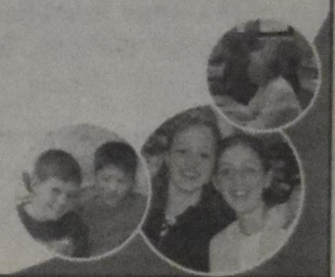
A detailed job description and qualification schedule is available upon request. Salary and benefits will be commensurate with training and experience as outlined in the *OACS/OCSAA Administrators' Salary Guidelines*.

Suitably qualified Christian applicants are invited to apply before December 31, 2006. The successful applicant would commence duties in July, 2007.

A formal Letter of Application and supporting references should be sent to:

Dr. A. Guldemond, Executive Director
Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools
617 Garner Road, E.,
Ancaster ON L9G 3K9

Informal inquiries can be made to the Executive Director at adriang@oacs.org.



www.oacs.org

Principal

IMMANUEL CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL

Lethbridge, Alberta

We are seeking a leader with a commitment to Jesus Christ for an interdenominational 7 – 12 school with an enrolment of approximately 300 students, beginning August 1, 2007. Applicants should have an enthusiasm for the Reformed vision of Christian education and have administrative and team-building abilities.

If you would like to join our dynamic three campus society in providing high-quality Christian education, please reply to:

Mr. Corny VanDasselaar, Chairman
Principal Search Committee
***RR-8-41-3*, Lethbridge AB T1J 4P4**
Phone: 403-320-5987 / Fax: 403-320-6587
Email: benchmark@shockware.com

TIMOTHY CHRISTIAN SCHOOL – Barrie, Ontario

Due to the retirement of our principal Leo Smit, TCS is inviting applications for

Principal

beginning August 1, 2007. Timothy is seeking an experienced, visionary and enthusiastic leader who can direct and promote the cause of Christian education in the rapidly growing Barrie community.
TCS serves a diverse interdenominational Christian community and offers a JK – Grade 8 program to over 200 students. The school operates in a new, spacious facility that has room to expand. Presently part of the school is used by Unity Christian High.

Qualified applicants should forward their resume details, along with a clear statement of their philosophy of Christain Education to:

Dr. Rebecca Verhaege (Search Committee Chair) at dr.rebecca@rogers.com or to the school.

Timothy Christian School
750 Essa Rd
Barrie, ON L4N 9E9

Phone: 705-726-6621
Fax: 705-726-8571
lsmit@timothychristianschool.ca

www.timothychristianschool.ca

Classifieds

REDEEMER
University College

Put your investment to work for a wonderful Kingdom cause!

Competitive Rates - 4.70% to 5.00%*
5 Year Term
Interest paid semi-annually

For Information Call: 1-877-779-0913 ext. 4205

*Other rates apply for RRSP/RIF plans

777 Garner Road East
Ancaster, ON L9K 1J4
www.redeemer.ca

Tel: 905-648-2131
Fax: 905-648-2134
stewardship@redeemer.ca

De Nederlandse COURANT

North America's oldest and most published Dutch language paper and exclusive aftermarket distributor of the Libelle and Margriet magazines in its 54th year of publication.

SPECIAL NEW SUBSCRIPTION OFFER

De Nederlandse COURANT: ❑ 1 year $15.00 (regular $30.00)
❑ 2 years $35.00 (regular $57.00)

❑ Margriet or ❑ Libelle with De Nederlandse COURANT:
❑ 1 year $100.00 (regular $150.00)
❑ 2 years $190.00 (regular $270.00)

Name:_____
Address:_____
City/Code:_____
Phone:_____ **E-Mail:**_____

Mail coupon with your cheque to:
De Nederlandse COURANT
2110 Hunt Crescent, Burlington ON L7M 2N9

★ **35 YEARS OF SERVICE** ★

CRC EXTENSION FUND

"...serving Christian Reformed churches and Christian schools since 1970"

Your funds will be invested in Christian Reformed Church and Christian school building projects in Canada.

RATES TO December 31, 2006
Ext. fund: we pay 4.5%
RRSP: you earn approx. 5.1%

Write: Christian Reformed Extension Fund
45 Harriet St, Toronto ON M4L 2G1
Fax: 416-465-6367 **Call**: **416-461-1207**

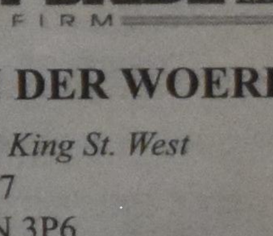
THE BACK TO GOD HOUR

Radio- From Coast to Coast
3475 Mainway PO Box 5070 Stn LCD1 Burlington ON L7R 3Y8 **Web: www.backtogod.net/**

BRITISH COLUMBIA
Burns Lake – CFLD ..... 9:15 am 1400
Osoyoos – CJOR ..... 8:00 am 1490
Prince George – CIRX.. 7:00 am 94.3
Princeton – CHOR..... 8:00 am 1400
Smithers – CFBV..... 9:15 am 1230
Vernon – CJIB ..... 9:30 pm 94
ALBERTA
Brooks – CIBQ ..... 8:30 am 1340
Edmonton – CJCA..... 6:00 pm 930
MANITOBA
Winnipeg – CKJS ..... 9:00 am 810
ONTARIO
Atikokan – CFAK..... 9:30 am 1240
Chatham – CFCO ..... 6:30 am 630
Hamilton – CHAM ..... 7:30 am 820
London – CKSL..... 7:00 am 1410
Owen Sound – CFOS .. 7:00 am 560
Sarnia – CHOK..... 7:30 am 1070
Stratford – CJCS..... 8:45 am 1240
Wingham – CKNX ..... 10:30 am 920
Woodstock – CJFH..... 7:30 am 94.03
NEW BRUNSWICK
Saint John – CHSJ ..... 9:00 am 94.1
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND
Charlottetown – CFCY . 7:00 am 630
NOVA SCOTIA
Digby – CKDY ..... 6:00 am 1420
Halifax – CFDR..... 8:30 am 780
Liverpool – CKBW ..... 7:30 am 94.5
Kentville – CKEN ..... 8:30 am 1490
Middleton – CKAD ..... 8:30 am 1350
Shelburne – CKBW ..... 7:30 am 93.1
Sydney – CJCB..... 7:00 am 1270
Weymouth – CKDY..... 8:30 am 103.1
Windsor – CFAB ..... 8:30 am 1450

TELEVISION - *PRIMARY FOCUS*
AB Lethbridge – CJIL Thurs at 9 pm.
BC- OMNI - Sunday 4 pm
TBN (Trinity Broadcasting Network)

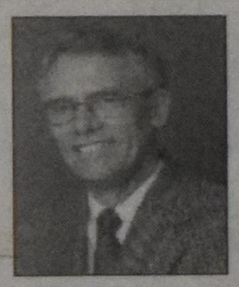
Kids Corner Radio



ALBERTA
Drayton Valley CIBW 92.9 FM ..... Sun. 8:30 am
High River/Calgary CHRB 1140 AM..Sun. 4:30pm
Nordegg CHBW 93.9 FM..... Sun. 8:30 am
Rocky Mtn.House CHBW 94.5 FM. Sun. 8:30 am
BRITISH COLUMBIA
Prince Rupert CIAJ 100.7 FM ..... Sat. 10 am
MANITOBA
Steinbach CHSM 1250 AM ..... Sun. 4 pm
NOVA SCOTIA
Bridgewater CKBW 1000 AM ..... Sun. 5:30 am
ONTARIO
Oshawa CKDO 1350 AM ..... Sat. 8 am
Woodstock CJFH 94.3 FM ..... Sat. 8 am
SASKATCHEWAN
Estevan CJSL 1280 AM ..... Sun. 7 am
Weyburn CJSL 1190 AM ..... Sun. 7 am

FRED HAGEN Realty

905-388-9555
33 Bellstone Lane
Mount Hope,
Ontario L0R 1W0
Email: hagen@fredhagenrealty.com
www.fredhagenrealty.com



Fred Hagen
Broker

Providing personal professional real estate service for the Hamilton and surrounding areas.

Please support our advertisers!

We as staff at *CC*, thank them for their patronage. Without them, we would not be able to continue.

ROSS & McBRIDE LLP
LAW FIRM

DAVID A. VAN DER WOERD

Commerce Place, 1 King St. West
Mail: P.O. Box 907
Hamilton, ON L8N 3P6

Ph: 905-526-9800
Fax: 905-526-0732
Direct: **905-572-5803**
Email:
dvanderwoerd@rossmcbride.com

Just another reminder that our Christmas issue is on the horizon.
Please let us know if you want to be included with special Christmas greetings or advertisements.
Contact Ineke at **905-682-8311**
or email: **ads@christiancourier.ca**

Arie Hoogerbrugge
Associate Broker

RE/MAX Del Mar Realty Inc.
860 Queenston Road
Stoney Creek, ON L8G 4A8
Bus: **905-662-5300**
Res: **905-945-3506**
E-mail: arie@remaxdelmar.com
Website: www.houseplus.com/ariehoogerbrugge

Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Nov 17 Zingend Geloven Foundation presents the Annual Dutch Christmas Hymn Sing, 7.30 p.m. "Heritage Hall" of Holland Christian Homes, **Brampton**, Ont. With participation of The Liberation Choir, Willem Van Suijdam, Director; Lenny Dykstra, Song Leader; Rev. Peter Van Egmond, meditation.

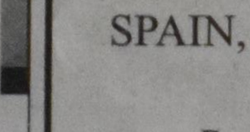
Nov 17 Ambassadors Christian Male Chorus **Chatham** First Presbyterian Church, Fifth St, 7:30 p.m. Contact: H. Hystek 519-351-0684

Nov 18 The Lighthouse Annual Fundraising Dinner and Silent Auction at Villa Colombo in **Toronto.** Reservations required 416-535-6262

Nov 19 Ambassadors Christian Male Chorus with duet: Michael & Laura Pin. **Drayton** Reformed Church, 7:30 p.m. Contact: E. Walter 519-638-2953.

Nov 23 Redeemer University College Annual Business Community Open House, 777 Garner Rd. E., **Ancaster**. Contact J. McKenzie 905-648-2139 Ext. 4493. See details in ad

Dec.10 Dutch Service will be held in the **Ancaster** Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. Henry DeBolster will be preaching.



Dec 10 Dutch Language Christmas Carol Service, 7:30 p.m. at Emmanuel Reformed Church in **Woodstock**. See ad this issue.

Dec 22 LIBERATION CHOIR - 3rd ANNUAL CHRISTMAS SINGALONG 8 PM Central Presbyterian Church, 165 Charlton Ave West, Hamilton ON Director and Organist: Willem Van Suijdam Free-will offering for Worldwide Christian Schools. Contact: WCS at 905 333 4430

For issue dates and deadlines, writer guidelines, and job opportunities recently published in *CC*, go to our website: www.christiancourier.ca

Midwives OF STONEY CREEK

....**We Deliver!**

- All pre and post-natal care fully funded
- Home and hospital births

phone: **905.546.5002** pager: 905.974.1838
38 King St. W, Stoney Creek, Ontario L8G 1H6
Email: midwivesofstoneycreek@bellnet.ca
Website: www.themidwives.info

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE APOSTLES

Turkey and the Early Christian Church

April 30 - May 17, 2007

Cost: $4075 pp (Calgary) or
$3745 pp (Toronto)
$300 Early booking discount
Stop over in Holland possible

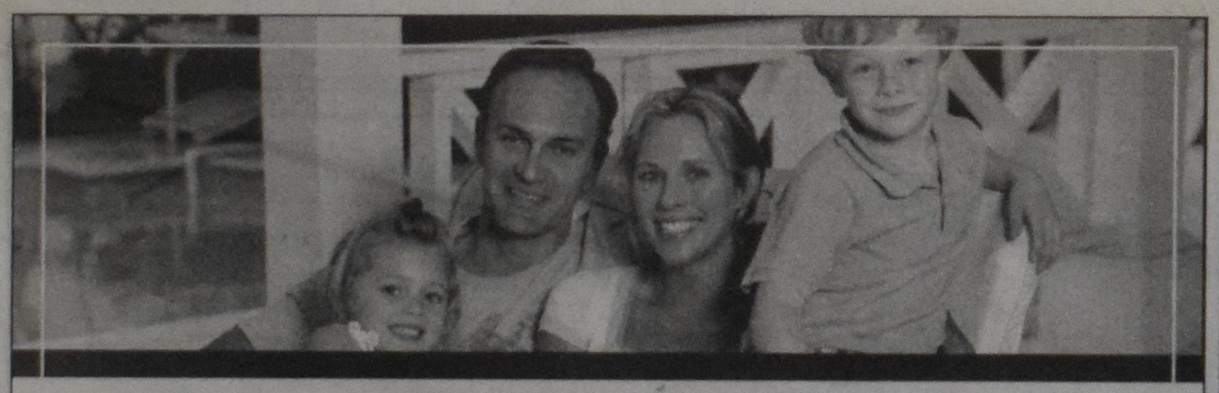
Personally escorted by
Pastor & Mrs. Jack & Alice Hielema

For information and reservations
Call or write

The Hielemas
Rostad Tours
10 - 3109 Palliser Drive SW
Calgary AB Canada T2V 4W5

Toll free: 1-800-361-8687
Fax: (403)238-4063
Email: tours@rostad.com
or
(403)348-5464 (Red Deer)
jackhielema@shaw.ca

Rostad Tours *Quality Escorted Tours since 1980*



Are You Paying Too Much?

Reviewing your life insurance?
Check out these 10 year renewable term life insurance monthly rates:

	Male		Female	
Age	$250,000	$500,000	$250,000	$500,000
30	$15.42	$23.40	$12.32	$16.98
35	$16.16	$25.18	$14.00	$20.30
40	$19.35	$32.47	$17.55	$24.95
45	$27.97	$44.10	$19.80	$32.85
50	$37.35	$65.48	$26.55	$44.87
55	$58.50	$108.00	$40.95	$74.08
60	$90.00	$164.85	$63.00	$111.26

The above rates are preferred non-smoker rates

Tyler vanMiddelkoop
CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER

P.V.&V. Financial Centre
905 632 6192
1 866 694 7276
tylerm@pvv-insurance.com
Trust Our Experience

valentine A Division of Merit Vacations **Winter Escape**

SPAIN, PORTUGAL, ARUBA, CALIFORNIA, MEXICO
& many other destinations.

Portugal Special 4 weeks from 1479.00. *Call us for brochures.*

Mississauga 905-890-5333 or 1-800-268-6144
London 519-472-2700 or 1-800-265-1141
TICO Registration #4499356

the Windmill Herald

Expanded English Section
Only $29.50 per year
Published twice a month.
• Ask for a trial copy •

Canada: P.O. Box 3006, Stn LCD1, Langley, BC V3A 4R3
USA: P.O. Box 313, Lynden, WA 98264-0313
Phone: 1-800-881-0705 **fax:** (604) 532-1734
email: windmill@godutch.com
Internet: www.GoDutch.com
• Call for a copy of the
Dutch Heritage Pages book catalogue.

EUROPE & WORLDWIDE
DCA Travel & Cruise

Toll-free **1-800-667-2525**
E-mail:
info@dca-travel.com
•Flights •Cruises
• All inclusive Holiday Packages
ON SALE
TORONTO 416-224-5211
Best insurance coverage-lowest price.
Call today.

EUROPE & WORLDWIDE
DCA Travel & Cruise

News

Has Africa finally turned a corner?

Scott Baldauf

JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA – With a decade of sustained economic growth, increasing demand for African minerals and oil, and a falling number of conflicts, the trend lines for some countries in sub-Saharan Africa are finally starting to look pretty good.

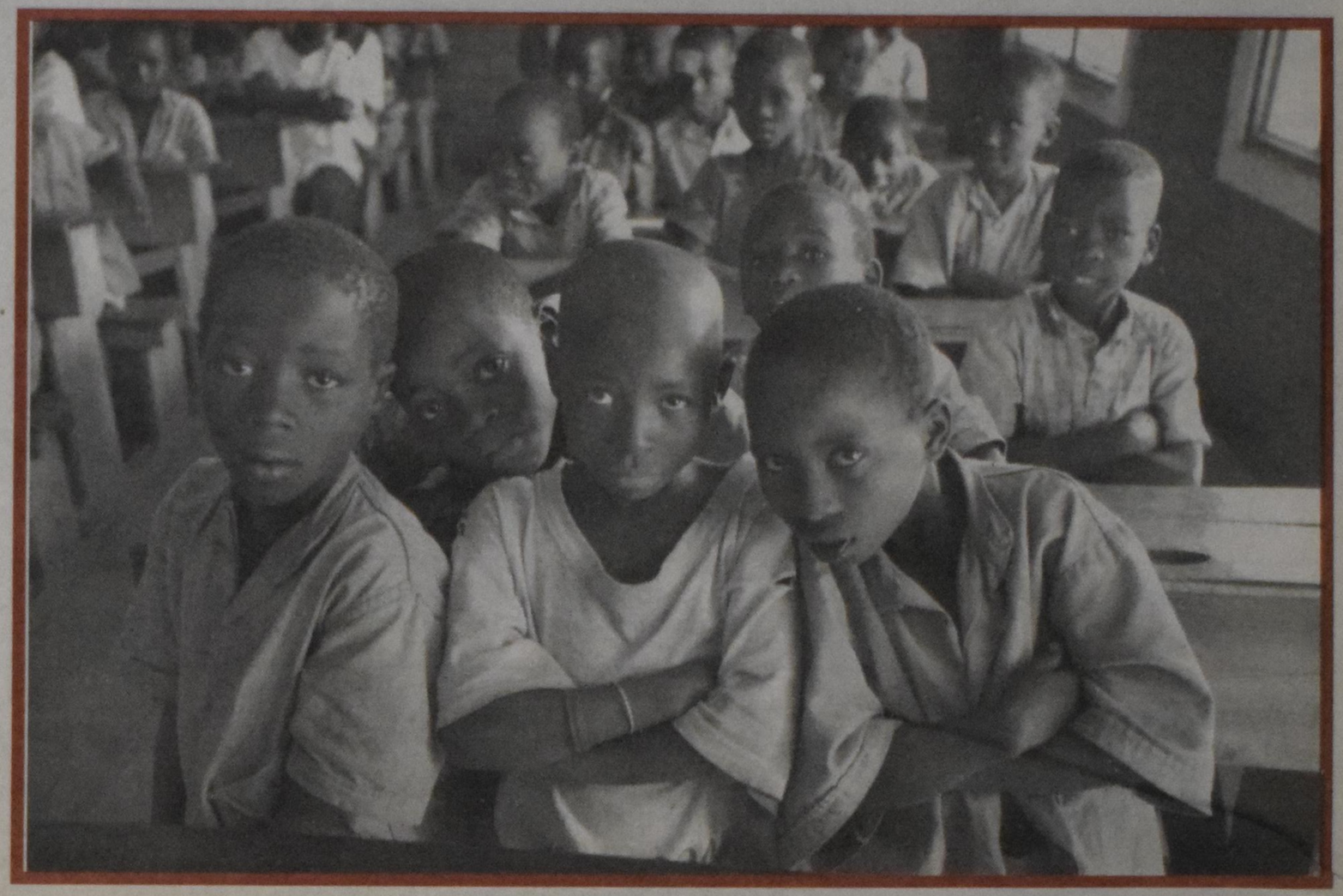
A new World Bank report, issued two weeks ago, has gone as far as to say that 2005 may be the year when Africa "turned the corner" from poverty and debt to prosperity and wealth. In a continent that was once almost entirely dependent on foreign aid, there are now 16 countries that have achieved annual growth rates in excess of 4.5 percent for more than a decade.

"Africa today is a continent on the move, making tangible progress on delivering better health, education, growth, trade, and poverty-reduction outcomes," said Gobind Nankani, the World Bank vice president for the Africa region.

The African Development Indicators for 2006 report, of course, doesn't pretend that all of Africa's problems have been solved – from the spread of HIV-AIDS to continued conflicts in Sudan and Somalia to the persistent lack of basic services, such as water, sanitation, and education. But for a continent that has gotten used to hearing glass-half-empty analysis of what has gone wrong, the report has decidedly emphasized what has gone right.

"While economic outcomes are increasingly diverse, Africa has made near uniform progress in social outcomes, notably education and health," explained John Page, the World Bank's Chief Economist for the Africa Region.

It is the very diversity of Africa – with fast-growing oil states like Equatorial Guinea and rapidly-declining states like Zimbabwe – that makes any sweeping statement imprecise at best.



Yet here are a few encouraging trend lines that are starting to have repercussions of the positive sort.

- The number of conflicts in Africa has dropped to just five in 2005, from a peak of 16 in 2002.
- During the past two decades, fertility rates have dropped in every African country. The greatest drop in fertility is found in Namibia to 3.8 in 2004 from 5.9 in 1990, followed by Rwanda, to 5.5 (2004) from 7.4 (1990).
- Several African countries, including Senegal, Mozambique, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Uganda, and Ghana are on course to cut the number of people living in poverty by half by 2010. Cutting poverty is one of the Millennium Development Goals agreed to by 189 nations in New York in 2000.
- Enrollment in primary schools has increased continent-wide to 93 percent in 2004 from 72 percent in 1990, and literacy rates have consequently risen to 65 percent in 2002 from 50 percent in 1997.

Low incomes, bad roads and ports

Yet amid these positive trends, there are darker clouds as well.

- Almost half of Africa's population still lives below the poverty line, which the World Bank defines as an income of less than $1 a day.
- African economies must grow at about an annual rate of 7 percent – on a par with India and China – in order to meet their target of cutting poverty in half by 2015. Governments must also either invest or encourage investment of at least 5 percent of their gross domestic product in infrastructure in order for their economies to continue growing.
- Inadequate roads, inefficient ports, and power outages have helped make Africa home to six of the 10 countries judged to be the most difficult environments in which to start a business, according to a recent World Bank study. The lack of foreign investment – Africa received just 1.6 percent of all foreign direct investment ($10.1 billion) in 2005 – means fewer jobs to relieve poverty.

Prosperity brings new challenges

Sarah Crowe, spokeswoman for the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), says that even economic prosperity can bring its own set of new challenges.

"We're now moving to a world of peri-urban slums and megacities bursting at the seams – such as Kinshasa and Lagos and Nairobi – with people moving to cities to find work," says Ms. Crowe. Such big cities have been unable to keep pace with the population growth, and growing demand for clean drinking water and sanitation facilities. Big cities are also key points for the spread of HIV-AIDS, a disease with devastating economic potential, since it targets primarily those who are in their prime working years.

"Unquestionably, there is a momentum there, but the big challenge for NGOs (non-governmental organizations) will be these gray areas," adds Crowe.

Some in the aid community say that the World Bank's report may have been overzealous in painting a picture of African progress. "Turned a corner?" chortled one American financier with decades of experience in African aid projects. "This is a maze we're in here. There's going to be lots of corners."

Greg Mills, director of the Brenthurst Foundation, a think tank on strengthening African economic performance, argues that the most important trend seen in the World Bank report is showing that Africa can no longer be seen as a single entity.

"What the World Bank report is showing is the growing differentiation in the African continent, and the different problems between countries and regions," he says. "This is contrary to the notion of African Unity."

There are commodity-producing countries like Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Sudan, and South Africa, and agricultural powerhouses like Kenya and Tanzania. There are landlocked nations like the Central African Republic, with little access to global markets, and rapidly globalizing countries like South Africa, Mauritius, Tanzania, and Benin.

Finally, there are countries like Nigeria, Ethiopia, Sudan, and the DRC that are so large and diverse that they are difficult to govern as a single entity. While some of these larger countries often have valuable resources, they will still have trouble emerging as winners in the global marketplace unless they start to change their system of governance, Mr. Mills says.

"The critical elementary differences between [African] countries are their regimes and their natural resources," says Mills. "Since they can't change their size and resources, the one thing they can change is the style of their government, and those that are generally performing better are the latter group," which like Rwanda, South Africa, Botswana, and Uganda, have instituted substantial governmental reforms.

Innovate – don't print money

Ross Herbert, head of a research project on governance at the South African Institute for International Affairs in Johannesburg, says that one of the best signs for Africa in the past decade is that fewer African leaders solve their problems today by printing more money.

But Africa's current prosperity – largely the result of global demand for commodities such as natural gas, oil, timber, copper, iron, coal, and cobalt – is a temporary window of opportunity that analysts say should not be wasted.

"Africa has to go out into the world and learn markets," says Herbert. "Chinese companies went to Ghana and studied kinte cloth, and now you can buy Chinese cloth that emulates kinte that is cheaper than the local cloth."

"That is how competitive other countries are," he says. "We have to choose ... to climb the ladder faster than other countries. And no one, other than Zimbabwe, is standing still."